

America in British Political Culture during the Long 1950s

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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War, the question of British attitudes towards the United States of America has received significant attention as historians and commentators have debated whether Britain has belonged to an English-speaking Anglosphere or a Europe defined by anti-Americanism. This research examines these contrasting ideas about British views of the US through a study of Britain's political culture during the long 1950s. During this period events and trends from across the Atlantic were keenly monitored in Britain as the growth of the close Anglo-American diplomatic relationship added to the longstanding interest in US culture. This thesis provides an original contribution to debates about the 'special relationship' by analysing sources indicative of wider attitudes and ideologies which are often overlooked in existing accounts. It utilises a synthesis of sources including those pertaining to Britain's political parties and their ancillary organisations, the media, and fictional representations of the US in order to analyse the reactions to America. Ultimately, it challenges the idea that anti-Americanism was widespread in post-war Britain and suggests that the threat posed by this viewpoint was usually exaggerated. Not only was the British political system particularly attentive to American trends and events but the majority of Britons were able to draw inspiration from groups or individuals in the US. Rather than being consistently positive or negative, views of the country intersected with other ideological beliefs and political exigencies, meaning that America was interpreted in diverse ways. Although there was often negativity about the country or opposition to its policies, these are best described as rational or reasonable criticism rather than excessive anti-Americanism. It was the US's unprecedented international position rather than a surfeit of negativity which meant that it received sustained attention in Britain.

Introduction

In a 1960 lecture about a recent visit to the United States of America, popular novelist Kingsley Amis complained about the ‘largely mistaken and dangerous’ state of British attitudes towards the country. He reported that:

the pervasiveness of anti-American spirit is so thorough that it has become part of our national life, like discussing the weather or county cricket, something that binds together high and low, old and young, something so obvious that to mention it at all seems faintly absurd, humourless, pedantic [...]

Anti-Americanism, he claimed, was based on British ‘neuroses’ and the ‘envy of that nation which took world leadership away from Britain by means so much more humiliating than defeat in war.’¹ Amis’s ideas were provocative enough for the left-wing Fabian Society to reject the opportunity to publish the speech but his claims about post-war anti-Americanism were not as overlooked or unusual as he believed.² Despite having been seldom mentioned in the press or Parliament before 1945, by the early 1960s the term was well established within Britain’s political discourse as various politicians, journalists, officials and even celebrities discussed its extent and motivation.³ This anxiety about anti-Americanism was merely one sign of the popular post-war belief that the 1950s marked a period of strain or discord for the Anglo-American relationship. A vast literature was published which addressed the state of the alliance — or European-American interaction more broadly — and attempted to diagnose the reasons for the tension between the two countries. With titles which included *Britain – Uneasy Ally*, *Less than Kin* and *Problems in Co-operation*, these studies tended to re-enforce the idea that the relationship between Britain and

¹ Kingsley Amis, ‘America, 1960’, Unpublished speech, Fabian Society/E/132/1, Fabian Society Papers, London School of Economics Special Collections (FSP).

² Fabian Society General Secretary Shirley Williams replied to Amis and noted that, though the lecture could be useful in countering the ‘anti-Americanism’ from the left-wing of the Labour Party, it stated its case too strongly. Letter from Shirley Williams to Kingsley Amis, 17 November 1960, Fabian Society/E/132/1, FSP.

³ In the *Daily Mail* in July 1953, it was reported that American singers Jerry Lee Lewis and Dean Martin had complained about the ‘anti-American biases’ of the British public. See ‘Tanfield’s Diary’, *Daily Mail*, 27 July 1953, 4.

the US was troubled.⁴ Such views were not confined to academia and the London Correspondent for American journal *Newsweek*, Fred Vanderschmidt, even claimed in 1947 that as many as one in three Britons could be described as anti-American.⁵

Despite these anxieties about the growth of anti-Americanism and its effects on the Anglo-American relationship, the paradox was that these fears of a popular British antipathy towards the US grew at a time of increased intimacy between the two countries. Shared global interests led to unprecedented defence and intelligence co-operation sustained by a network of personal relationships between officials and politicians. The maintenance and extension of the alliance was, moreover, a central aim of post-war British foreign policy and concerns about the growth of anti-Americanism did not diminish the belief in a common Anglo-Saxon political heritage. Wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill was foremost in emphasising that the two countries comprised part of an Atlantic community based on their similar language, culture and political traditions. This thesis examines these divergent perspectives about post-war British attitudes towards the US. Investigating the long 1950s, it analyses sources pertaining to Britain's political culture often ignored in studies of Anglo-American relations in order to characterise reactions to American politics, society, international policy and culture. It questions how far the panic about anti-Americanism was justified and the associated question of whether the putative 'special relationship' extended to British attitudes towards the US.

⁴ Leon Epstein, *Britain – Uneasy Ally* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1954); Henry Pelling, *America and the British Left: From Bright to Bevan* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1956); Franz M. Joseph (ed), *As Others See Us: The United States through Foreign Eyes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959); Andre Visson, *As Others See Us* (New York: Doubleday, 1948); William Clark, *Less than Kin* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957); Fred Vanderschmidt, *What the English think of us* (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1948); Henry Roberts and Paul Wilson, *Britain and the United States: Problems in Co-operation* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1953); James Burnham (ed), *What Europe thinks of America* (New York: John Day Company, 1953); William Buchanan and Hedley Cantril, *How Nations See Each Other* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953); Henry Lee Munson (ed), *European Beliefs Regarding the United States* (New York: Common Council for American Unity, 1949); Bruce Russett, *Community and Contention: Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (Westport: Greenwood, 1963); Milton Graham, 'British Attitudes towards America', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1951; Milton Graham, 'Anti-Americanism: British Garden Variety' *Antioch Review*, 12, 2 (1952), 217-228.

⁵ Fred Vanderschmidt, *What the English think of us*, 2.

Literature Review

Since 1945, the Anglo-American relationship has been the subject of extensive academic scrutiny as scholars have assessed the reasons for the diplomatic arrangements and questioned whether the alliance can accurately be described as unique or ‘special.’ An important tension in this literature has been the question of whether culture or *realpolitik* has been more important in determining its course. Broadly speaking, two approaches to the subject have been apparent: one which identifies the importance of shared values, culture, institutions and heritage in provoking co-operation and another which points to the role played by shared interests and goals in world affairs. Surveying the literature in 2013, Alan Dobson and Steve Marsh described this as a ‘Manichean division’ but in practice the latter has been the more popular in studies of the ‘special relationship.’⁶ This emphasis on interests as the main factor informing the alliance and its vicissitudes — an approach described by Alex Danchev as ‘functionalism’ — has tended to focus on the state and intergovernmental co-operation.⁷ Questions about the subject have consequently addressed the extent to which Anglo-American interests coincided during different periods and in various parts of the world. Influenced by realist conceptions of international relations, these scholars have focused on foreign policy makers and utilised Foreign Office and State Department papers, portraying the alliance as one of ‘competitive co-operation’ or an ‘ambiguous partnership.’⁸ Notions of specialness have tended to be regarded with suspicion with the adjective confined to inverted commas or charges that the alliance is either in terminal decline or has already ceased to exist.⁹

Although the intergovernmental features of the relationship have been accorded extended scrutiny, its cultural, sentimental and ideological aspects have received less attention. David Watt articulated a common perspective

⁶ Alan Dobson and Steve March, *Anglo-American Relations: Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2013), 2.

⁷ Alex Danchev, ‘On Specialness’, *International Affairs*, 72, 4 (1996), 737-50.

⁸ David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-41: a study in competitive co-operation* (London: Europa, 1981); Robert Hathaway, *Ambiguous Partnership: Britain and America, 1944-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

⁹ John Dickie, *‘Special’ No More: Anglo-American Relations: Rhetoric and Reality* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994).

when in 1986 he claimed that ‘the underlying basis of the Anglo-American relationship has always been interest and not, in the first place, emotion.’¹⁰ When several studies of the Anglo-American relationship were published following the end of the Cold War, their treatment of culture or wider attitudes was cursory by comparison with the diplomatic features.¹¹ Steve Smith’s comment from 1990 still holds true of these realist, state-led studies: ‘much of the writing on the relationship overstates the importance of personality’ and too often ‘actors’ own views are used as the starting point of analysis, whereas these themselves were structured by the situation.’¹² Although the governments in Washington and London were central in determining the nature of bilateral co-operation and were pivotal during international crises, the alliance can be conceived as having operated on several levels: intergovernmental, elite/official and public/mass sentiment.¹³ To focus on the first of these alone risks divorcing successive Prime Ministers and Presidents from their political contexts as well as the domestic organisations to which they owed their authority. Despite the executive’s primacy in making British foreign policy, every post-war Prime Minister had to contend with opposition over their stances towards the Anglo-American relationship. Even the strongest leaders had to operate within certain ideological parameters and be sensitive to wider perspectives and attitudes. Furthermore, the heads of government were themselves the product of their political culture, arriving in office with assumptions or prejudices that pre-dated their election.

By investigating the long 1950s between the Korean War and Cuban Missile Crisis, this thesis aims to assess the ways in which the US was represented in

¹⁰ David Watt, ‘Introduction: The Anglo-American Relationship’, in Wm. Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (eds), *The Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 3.

¹¹ John Baylis, *Anglo-American Relations since 1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Ritchie Ovendale, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); Alan Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1995). John Dumbrell’s study gave culture the most extended attention and several others included some discussion of this aspect of the relationship. John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2001); C. J. Bartlett, *‘The Special Relationship’: A Political History of Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (London: Longman, 1992).

¹² Steve Smith, ‘The Special Relationship’, *Political Studies*, 38, (1990), 136.

¹³ Joseph Frankel, *British Foreign Policy 1945-1973* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 204.

Britain's political culture in order to scrutinise this wider context within which decisions about the Anglo-American relationship were made. Although culture has at times been neglected in accounts of the 'special relationship,' since the end of the Cold War it has received more sustained attention. As well as being a sign of the 'cultural turn' in studies of history and international relations, the fact that the alliance survived the collapse of the Soviet Union led to questions as to whether its longevity was partly the result of sentimental factors unrelated to shared interests. According to Tim Dunne, the 2003 war in Iraq 'reaffirmed the vice-like grip of Atlanticism on Britain's identity.'¹⁴ Such studies emphasised the importance of myth, collective memory and identity in preserving the 'special relationship,' factors which influenced British policy-makers in particular to continue to cultivate links with Washington.¹⁵ For William Wallace, an Atlanticist narrative about Britain's history and statehood retained a more powerful hold on the imaginations of policy-makers than its rival, which stressed that the United Kingdom was an essential part of Europe.¹⁶

For conservatives, the ostensible shared culture and particularly the common political values and institutions represented an Anglosphere or Anglo-America. These scholars revived and extended the Churchillian ideas that were fashionable with the first generation of British Americanists in the 1950s and 1960s. Their support for Atlanticism informed their Whiggish narratives about the nineteenth century 'ripening of friendship' and led them to minimise Anglo-American conflict. H. C. Allen summarised this view by stressing the importance of 'the fact that from their common heredity, environment, and will, there has developed an increasing similarity, and even sometimes identity of opinion and action.'¹⁷ The continued Anglo-American co-operation in the war

¹⁴ Tim Dunne, 'When the Shooting Starts': Atlanticism in British security strategy', *International Affairs*, 80, 5, (2004), 908.

¹⁵ Steve Marsh and John Baylis, 'The Anglo-American "Special Relationship": The Lazarus of International Relations', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 17 (2006), 174.

¹⁶ William Wallace, 'Foreign Policy and National Identity in the United Kingdom', *International Affairs*, 67, 1 (1991), 65-80.

¹⁷ H. C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relation, 1783-1952* (London: Odhams, 1954), 33. See also H. C. Allen, *The Anglo-American Relationship since 1783* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1959); Frank Thistlethwaite, *The Great Experiment: An Introduction to the History of the American People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); Herbert Nicholas, *Britain and the United States* (Baltimore:

on terror led to these themes being revived. However, the Anglosphere referred to a network of ‘special relationships’ between the US, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and English-speaking South Africa with its proponents suggesting that this group of countries was destined for international leadership. Walter Russell Mead described this culture area as ‘the group of countries where English is the native language of a substantial majority of the population and where social values and culture are largely shaped by Anglo-Saxon values.’¹⁸ Not only were there similarities in the political outlook within this culture area but its openness, strong civil society institutions and individualist ethos were said to have made it ‘the pathfinder for all humanity.’¹⁹ The rise of information technology and the internet had led to a ‘cultural re-convergence’ and given these English-speaking countries the chance to extend their apparent global hegemony despite the rise of Asia. In Britain, Conservatives who opposed closer integration with the European Union promoted the Anglosphere — or the development of the links with the former Commonwealth with which the Anglosphere overlapped — as an alternative.²⁰

The notion of an Anglosphere poses several problems when attempting to understand Anglo-American interactions. On the left, the Anglosphere has even been labelled as a neoliberal, imperialist and covertly racist project.²¹ However, more problematic has been the criticism that it homogenises both Britain and the US, ignoring the multiple political and cultural identities that existed in both countries.²² On both sides of the Atlantic, there have been prominent groups and individuals who have frequently questioned the viability of the ‘special relationship.’ Although the cultivation of close Anglo-American links has been

Johns Hopkins Press, 1963); D. W. Brogan, *American Aspects* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964).

¹⁸ Walter Russell Mead, *God and Gold: Britain, America and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Atlantic, 2007), 114.

¹⁹ James C. Bennett, *The Anglosphere Challenge: Why the English-Speaking Nations Will Lead the Way in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 72.

²⁰ Daniel Hannan, *How We Invented Freedom and Why it Matters* (London: Head of Zeus, 2013); David Willets, ‘England and Britain, Europe and the Anglosphere’, *The Political Quarterly*, 78, S1, 54-61.

²¹ Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

²² Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘The West as Anglo-America’, in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed), *Anglo-America and its Discontents* (London: Routledge, 2012), 1-30.

a goal of both major UK political parties for most of the period since 1945, it has at times provoked considerable opposition. During the Cold War, there were doubts in Parliament and amongst the wider public about the wisdom of aligning British foreign policy too closely with that of Washington. There have also been recent calls for Britain to integrate more closely with the European Union and become a continental rather than Atlantic power. Despite the ostensible similarities in the political values and cultures of Britain and the US, there was often tension as both governments and populations harboured various stereotypes and prejudices about their ally. Nonetheless, the emphasis on the Anglosphere has tended to ignore or minimise those moments during which Britain and the US experienced conflict and tension. As Arthur Campbell Turner, an advocate of a Churchillian view of the relationship, argued in 1972, anti-American sentiments were:

never voiced by responsible (seldom even irresponsible) politicians, never given any stamp of official approval, never “played up” in the press. All this tends to show that there was no great market for [anti-Americanism], that there was little advantage to be derived from being marked as a holder of anti-America opinions, no political capital to be gained thereby.²³

Despite the belief amongst these scholars that anti-Americanism was a peripheral attitude in Britain, the end of the Cold War witnessed the growth in studies of the phenomenon. European-American disagreements about the 2003 war in Iraq contributed to the proliferation of these studies as commentators and historians on both sides of the Atlantic identified it as widespread in British life. Rather than being a part of an Anglosphere, Britain was believed to be a part of Europe which was increasingly defined by its opposition to Washington. As Robert Kagan put it ‘Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus.’²⁴ After the term was popularised in the early 1950s amidst post-war Anglo-American tension, anti-Americanism tended to attract academic attention during the moments of conflict between Europe and the US which tended to

²³ Arthur Campbell Turner, *The Unique Partnership: Britain and the United States* (New York: Pegasus, 1971), 32.

²⁴ Robert Kagan, *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (London: Atlantic, 2003).

coincide with Republican administrations. After the initial post-war interest, the 1980s and 2000s witnessed subsequent extension of analysis of the concept with its meaning and scope undergoing various changes. Towards the end of the Cold War, anti-Americanism continued to be defined in similar terms to those used by Kingsley Amis in 1960. Its advocates were said to be motivated by feelings of envy, resentment and bitterness at Britain's post-war decline *vis-à-vis* Washington.²⁵ By the 2000s, however, the vast attention accorded to the subject meant that its definition and scope were contested as it was variously described as an ideology, a counter-productive prejudice comparable with anti-Semitism or an anti-democratic outlook.²⁶ For Moncho Tamames, it amounted to 'the principal ideological current in the world' and Ivan Krastev argued that anti-Americanism had 'become a global reflex and a master framework with broad and flexible appeal.'²⁷ Scholars stressed its polyvalent character, focusing on its plurality and ability to mutate according to time and space. Katzenstein and Keohane identified four types of anti-Americanism: liberal, social, social-nationalist and radical.²⁸ Others have focused on the ways in which officials and authorities attempted to counter the growth of such attitudes. This has been one aspect of studies of the cultural Cold War, which have assessed the ways in which both superpowers attempted to manage their international reputations and project favourable impressions of their politics and society.²⁹

The interest in the historical and contemporary evidence of anti-American sentiment has resulted in some ambiguity about what constitutes the attitude.

²⁵ Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Critiques at Home and Abroad, 1965-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Stephen Haseler, *The Varieties of Anti-Americanism: Reflex and Response* (Washington, D.C., Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1985).

²⁶ For a summary of the differing interpretations of 'anti-Americanism' see Brendon O'Connor, 'What is Anti-Americanism?' in Brendon O'Connor (ed), *Anti-Americanism: Volume 1 Causes and Sources* (Oxford: Greenwood, 2007), 1-22.

²⁷ Quoted in Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, *Flagging Patriotism: Cries of Narcissism and Anti-Americanism* (London: Routledge, 2007), xi. Ivan Krastev, 'Introduction' in Ivan Krastev and Alan McPherson (eds), *The Anti-American Century* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2007), 2.

²⁸ Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007).

²⁹ Hugh Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War: Calling the Tune?* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 1999); David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy in the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Hans Krabbendam and Giles Scott-Smith, *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-60* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Most accounts point to the need to distinguish between pathological hatred and well-informed, reasonable or logical criticism of the US and Washington. For Andrei Markovits the crucial distinction is the difference between criticisms of what America *is* and what America *does* with only the former representing genuine anti-Americanism.³⁰ Despite these attempts to differentiate between criticism and prejudice, some definitions have been particularly inclusive and blur these categories. Sylvia Ellis, for example, described anti-Americanism as ‘characterized by an opposition to U.S. values, culture and policies,’ as well as being ‘connected to a fear of the pervasive influence of American culture on British life, a culture viewed as morally bankrupt and overly commercialized.’³¹ Such a broad definition indicates some of the problems with efforts to point to the depth of anti-American sentiment as these terms can result in almost any dissenter or critic of the US being dismissed as holding such views. Few of those accused of anti-Americanism were willing to identify as holding such attitudes and often sought to defend their reputations against this political insult. As Marcus Cunliffe has noted, the term ‘is a highly pejorative label,’ and the fact that it has been freely used to criticise opponents’ views is grounds for caution in invoking the term.³² Indeed, the growing use of the concept has been criticised on these grounds by Max Paul Friedman, who has argued that “‘Anti-Americanism’ [...] came to explain almost any political position not in accord with the American policy of the day, regardless of the issues at stake.”³³ Federico Romero similarly argued that, ‘confounding different phenomena in a soup conveniently labelled as anti-Americanism is not a particularly useful tool for analysis.’³⁴ Various accounts have rejected the idea that Britain, with its historic links with the US and post-war ‘special relationship’ deserved to be subsumed into a European culture area defined by opposition to American

³⁰ Andrei Markovits, *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 11.

³¹ Sylvia Ellis, *A Historical Dictionary of Anglo-American Relations* (Plymouth: Scarecrow, 2009), 43.

³² Marcus Cunliffe, ‘The Anatomy of Anti-Americanism’, in Rob Kroes and Maarten Van Rossem, *Anti-Americanism in Europe* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1986), 25.

³³ Max Paul Friedman, *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 91.

³⁴ Federico Romero, ‘The Twilight of American Cultural Hegemony’, in David Farber (ed), *International Perceptions of the United States since 9/11* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 157.

policies and values. According to Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, anti-Americanism in Britain was ‘a matter of snobbishness and nasty journalistic remarks rather than political importance.’³⁵

Ultimately, then, there is little agreement about whether Britain belonged to an English-speaking Anglosphere or an anti-American Europe which derived political identity from its opposition to Washington. This thesis scrutinises these contrasting ideas about Britain’s international position and identity with reference to the long 1950s. Despite the recent proliferation of studies which have scrutinised both the Anglosphere and anti-Americanism, gaps remain for further study. The contemporary preoccupation with the extent of anti-Americanism has also been apparent in many subsequent studies. C. Vann Woodward reflected the common view when he argued that the 1950s ‘brought on a prolonged and quite *unflattering* barrage of criticism from left and right’ and ‘some of the bitterest anti-American criticism in the long history of the phenomenon.’³⁶ Moreover, the more recent accounts of anti-Americanism and the Anglosphere have tended to assess Britain’s perceptions of the US alongside other European countries.³⁷ Given the fact that it had a ‘special relationship’ with Washington and historical, cultural, linguistic and political links with the country unlike those of its nearest neighbours, Britain ought to be considered in isolation. A handful of theses and articles have addressed aspects of the subject but have tended to assess particular institutions, organisations or groups in isolation.³⁸ This study differs by assessing sources which relate to Britain’s political culture, specifically the political parties and their ancillary bodies, the press, BBC and fictional representations of the subject. By analysing

³⁵ Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, *Hating America: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 62.

³⁶ C. Vann Woodward, *The Old World’s New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), xxiv. Emphasis in Original. See also Robert Hathaway, *Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations since World War II* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 56.

³⁷ Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans have loved, hated, and transformed America culture since World War II* (London: Basic, 1997); David Ellwood, *The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³⁸ Giora Goodman, ‘Who is anti-American? The British Left and the United States, 1945-56’, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University College London, 1996. One excellent study on which this thesis aims to build is John F. Lyons 2013 study, which examined the effect of gender, age, class and political affiliation on attitudes towards the US. John F. Lyons, *America in the British Imagination: 1945 to the Present* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013).

declassified and published sources, the thesis addresses several related questions. How far were the widespread post-war fears about anti-Americanism justified? Was the Anglo-American 'special relationship' augmented by a political culture in Britain that was supportive of the alliance? How did attitudes towards the US intersect with other political values?

The Long 1950s

This thesis examines these questions by analysing the long 1950s. The 'long 1950s' is a suitable time-frame for assessing the arguments about the Anglosphere and anti-Americanism. It was a time during which the alliance satisfied David Reynolds's criteria for diplomatic uniqueness: it was both internationally important and unique in its bilateral qualities.³⁹ The years between the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 and Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 marked the high-point of the Cold War relationship. Afterwards, the asymmetry of power within the alliance became increasingly apparent and scholars and commentators began to pronounce the 'death' of the 'special relationship.' Though there would be revivals in the diplomatic co-operation in the 1980s and 2000s, the relationship during the 1960s and 1970s was characterised by both countries' existential crises, weak leadership and shifting international priorities. Despite the fact that the US and Anglo-American relationship were central to concepts such as 'decline,' 'affluence,' and 'consensus' which have typically been used to characterise the 1950s, the question of American cultural, political, economic and social influences have been for the most part overlooked in accounts of the decade.⁴⁰

As well as being a period during which the two countries were close in diplomatic terms, the US was also significant in various debates about Britain's politics, culture and foreign policy. A range of subjects led commentators,

³⁹ David Reynolds, 'A Special Relationship?' America, Britain and the International Order since the Second World War', *International Affairs*, 62, 1 (1985-6), 3.

⁴⁰ Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton (eds), *An Affluent Society? Britain's post-war "golden age" revisited* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004); Peter Hennessy, *Having it so Good: Britain in the Fifties* (London: Allen Lane, 2006); David Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951-7* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009); David Kynaston, *Modernity Britain, 1957-59* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had it so Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Abacus, 2005).

politicians and activists to look across the Atlantic for warnings or inspiration about future trends, policies and developments. As well as being crucial in debates about the Cold War, America was a model of modernity and discussions about the actions of its government or its lifestyle were apparent on questions pertaining to socio-economic policy, culture and politics. Britain's twentieth century has often been understood with reference to 'decline' or 'affluence' and both of these concepts led to focus on the US and reflection on the Anglo-American relationship. For officials in Whitehall, the two decades after 1945 were a period of retrenchment which appeared sharply to contrast with Washington's post-war prominence in international relations. As Britons debated their country's seeming decline, it was often against the expansion of the US that this process was judged. Similarly, as the living standards of the British population improved throughout the decade, the challenges of consumerism and commercialisation were confronted with reference to 'America.' Consequently, the subject played an important role in shaping the course of Britain's political history during the long 1950s. Both the Conservative and Labour parties experienced divisions over the alliance with Washington and the issue affected elections and the formation of governments. The Attlee Government's defeat in the 1951 general election occurred amidst Labour's division over the 'special relationship' and Anthony Eden's resignation as Prime Minister was in large part the result of the Anglo-American tension caused by the 1956 Suez Crisis. Though it is often held to be axiomatic that foreign policy has had a minor role in determining general election outcomes, Harold Macmillan was reported as having told Conservative MPs in April 1955 that 'Judging by experience in '45, '50 and '51, Elections tend to turn on some issue of foreign affairs.'⁴¹ Furthermore, opinion polling surveys conducted at the time reported that international questions were often ranked by Britons as amongst the most significant issues. In January 1956, foreign policy was ranked at the top of a Gallup poll asking Britons to identify the most important problems facing the government.⁴² Thus, this was an era

⁴¹ Minutes of the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee, 27 April 1955, CRD 2/34/1, Conservative Party Archive, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (hereafter CPA).

⁴² BIPO Survey 455, January 1956, CCO 180 2/1/2, CPA.

during which the US and Anglo-American relationship was central to British politics.

Methodology

This thesis explores these questions about British attitudes towards the US in the long 1950s by studying significant aspects and agencies of its political culture. Political culture has been defined in various ways since the term was popularised in the 1960s. For Walter Rosenbaum it amounted to ‘the underlying psychological forces that shape much of civic life’ and Dennis Kavanagh described the term as ‘the emotional and attitudinal environment within which the political system operates.’⁴³ According to Raymond Williams, these were the ‘structures of feeling’ that governed human behaviour and political activity.⁴⁴ In this sense, political culture has some similarities with ideology as students of both have attempted to assess clusters of attitudes, how they fit together and motivate political action. For example, according to Michael Freeden ideologies do not simply refer to the major ‘isms’ but are more ubiquitous as they ‘map the political and social worlds for us’ and people ‘cannot do without them because we cannot act without making sense of the worlds we inhabit.’⁴⁵ Indeed, both Atlanticism and anti-Americanism have often been described as ideologies which informed British attitudes towards the US.

Utilising a synthesis of sources, it is possible to assess the ways in which the US was debated and represented in Britain. Chief amongst these are the two major political parties. In the 1950s, Westminster was an archetypal two-party system as Labour and Conservative dominated general elections and the formation of governments and opposition. The beginning of the period marked the high-point of membership figures for both parties; the Tories boasted 2.75 million members whilst their left-wing rivals peaked at just over 1 million in

⁴³ Walter Rosenbaum, *Political Culture* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1975), 3-4; Dennis Kavanagh, *Political Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1972), 10.

⁴⁴ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128-35.

⁴⁵ Michael Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2.

1952.⁴⁶ Thus, political parties are a good indicator of wider attitudes because of their status as mediators and shapers of opinion as they perform the dual role of trying to reflect opinion in order to achieve electoral success whilst also trying to shape it and implement their political programmes. As well as both parties' archives, this project incorporates their published journals, policy documents and the memoirs and diaries of these organisations' senior figures. However, the parties cannot be assessed alone when gauging Britain's political culture. In 2010, Lawrence Black's call for the broadening in the scope of the studies of political history described the necessity of encompassing information from outside of the formal arena of Westminster:

Shifting from the world of elite politics to integrate popular politics and considering parties not in isolation, but in competition, is essential. But these can still operate within received parameters – tacitly assumed forms or customary sources of 'the political' – overlooking how parties and activists often have more in common with one each other than the rest of society. They insufficiently capture political *culture* – politics in its wider social setting, in which as a minority or occasional interest or identity, politics might bear a certain 'otherness', much as ethnicity or social class might.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, Black claimed that to overlook the political parties entirely would be too extreme; 'a discussion of political culture without party is like a party without fun – not uncommon but unfortunate.'⁴⁸ Existing accounts of Labour and Conservative attitudes towards the Anglo-American alliance have often addressed them in isolation and question which party was the better custodian of the 'special relationship.'⁴⁹ Typically, this means that there is a focus on the leaderships whilst the wider party and the ancillary organisations — specifically

⁴⁶ Paul Whiteley, Patrick Seyd and Jeremy Richardson, *True Blues: The Politics of Conservative Party Membership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 21; Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (London: Bodley Head, 2010), 290.

⁴⁷ Lawrence Black, *Redefining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2010), 3. Emphasis in Original.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4

⁴⁹ Peter Jones, *America and the British Labour Party* (London: Tauris, 1997); Alan Dobson, 'Labour or Conservative: Does it Matter in Anglo-American Relations?' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25 (1990), 387-407; Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Labour and the Anglo-American Alliance' in Antoine Capet and Aïssatou Sy-Wonyu, *The "Special Relationship"* (Rouen: Rouen University Publications, 2003), 169-184.

the trades unions and business groups — are accorded less scrutiny. Moreover, there were more similarities than differences between the parties; their senior politicians for the most part supported Atlanticism even though their memberships and supporters periodically objected to this strategy.

This thesis attempts to assess the attitudes within these organisations as part of Britain's wider political culture, studying them alongside other sources which give some indication of views about the US. The print media also reached a mass public and the long 1950s was an era during which its circulation increased; of the national dailies both the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mirror* expanded to reach over 4 million readers by 1961.⁵⁰ The thesis does not solely utilise the quality newspapers such as *The Times* or *Manchester Guardian* which had an important role in influencing government decisions and foreign policy; the tabloid press, which had much higher readerships, has also been consulted. The post-war period also witnessed the growth of interest in the examination of American affairs and an army of press and BBC correspondents were located on the previously less glamorous US East Coast. Through their regular dispatches, Alistair Cooke, René MacColl, Don Iddon and Robert Waithman were amongst the individuals who helped Britons to interpret American culture, politics and society. As well as using the reports of these journalists, this study has also utilised the BBC's archive of radio talks about the US in which the full transcripts of programmes and lectures broadcast throughout the 1950s are housed.

Political culture and attitudes towards political questions can be identified using sources beyond those generated and controlled by elites but these tend to be less plentiful and pose several methodological challenges. Techniques for the study of public attitudes remained primitive and biased towards particular sections of the population. Although some accounts have attempted to probe attitudes towards the Anglo-American alliance by using opinion polls or quantitative methods, there is only enough information from such data to

⁵⁰ Cmnd 1811, *Royal Commission on the Press 1961-1962* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), 12.

supplement this study, rather than play a greater role within it.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the contemporary findings of several social research organisations represent a rich and under-utilised source. The inter-war period witnessed the growth of academic attempts to measure attitudes and public opinion. The British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) and Mass Observation (M-O) were both founded with the aim of democratising policy-making by revealing the views and perspectives of the wider public.⁵² Despite some initial scepticism, by the 1950s both BIPO and M-O commanded attention from the parties and its regular surveys — reported in the *News Chronicle* — helped to shape the political debate. Indeed, it was M-O co-founder Tom Harrisson who was amongst the first to warn of the growth of British anti-Americanism.⁵³ Particularly vivid in revealing views about the US are M-O's surviving Directives and News Quotas from 1950-1. In August 1950, shortly after the outbreak of war in Korea, the organisation asked its national panel of voluntary observers to provide their opinions about six nationalities with the result being that it produced several hundred often detailed descriptions about each country and its population.⁵⁴ Although the responses only reveal a snapshot of attitudes at a particular time, they can nonetheless be used in conjunction with other sources to identify trends and patterns in views of the US.⁵⁵

As well as being able to ascertain attitudes from these quantitative and qualitative resources, fictional portrayals of the Anglo-American relationship, the US or its population can be revealing of wider beliefs and assumptions.

⁵¹ Bruce Russett, *Community and Contention*; Jorgen Rasmussen and James M. McCormick, 'British Mass Perceptions of the Anglo-American Special Relationship', *Political Science Quarterly*, 108, 3 (1993), 515-41.

⁵² James Hinton, *The Mass Observers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Mark Roodhouse, 'Fish-and-Chip Intelligence' Henry Durant and the British Institute of Public Opinion', *Twentieth Century British History*, 24, 2 (2013), 224-48; Penny Summerfield, 'Mass Observation: Social Research or Social Movement?', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 20, 3 (1985), 439-52.

⁵³ Tom Harrisson, 'British Opinion Moves Towards a New Synthesis', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 11, 3 (1947), 341.

⁵⁴ The question was quite open-ended as it asked participants 'What are your present feelings about:— a) The Japanese b) The Australians c) The Chinese d) The French e) The Russians f) The Americans.'

⁵⁵ Moreover, this study benefits from the original BIPO surveys released in the 1950s. A complete collection of these is housed at the Conservative Party Archive and provides data according to class, gender, age and political affiliation unlike the edited collections usually cited by historians.

Film directors or novelists did not transcend their political and social context but their works reflected debates and perceptions about the subject. As Alan Sinfield has noted, it 'is through such stories that ideologies are reinforced – and contested.'⁵⁶ In other words, these fictional portrayals help to frame political debates and the parameters within which these discussions occurred. Given its political salience, the Anglo-American relationship was often the subject of literary or cinematic representations. The financial arrangements of the post-war British film industry ensured that viewers were frequently presented with Hollywood actors occupying roles within majority British casts. The Anglo-American Film Agreement of 1948 specified that any profits over £17 million made by Hollywood studios in Britain had to be reinvested in the indigenous film industry. As a result, nominally British films could contain several US actors, directors or writers and thus provided frequent opportunities for the juxtaposition of actors from both countries.⁵⁷ Though audiences declined throughout the 1950s, weekly attendances still numbered 14.5 million in 1959, meaning that the medium was more popular than television and almost matched newspaper circulation.⁵⁸ As Sue Harper and Vincent Porter have noted, productions achieve popularity when 'they set up a 'parish of belief' between the film-maker and the film-goer — a set of shared assumptions, a safe place in which dangers can be explored and neutralized, and confidence restored.'⁵⁹ Consequently, fictional accounts are not divorced from the political process but contribute to the setting of parameters for discussion and contribute to ongoing debates about a range of subjects. Various studies have previously examined British fiction and film during the Cold War or the representations of politics

⁵⁶ Alan Sinfield, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 2.

⁵⁷ For information about the events and debates which led to this agreement see Paul Swann, *The Hollywood Feature Film in Postwar Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 81-102; Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema in the 1950s: The Decline of Deference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Chapter One. For a discussion of the American Embassy's attitudes towards the subject see Jonathan Colman, 'The US Embassy and British Film Policy, 1947-1948: a 'lesser but highly explosive question', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 7, 4 (2009), 413-30.

⁵⁸ John Ramsden, 'Refocusing 'The People's War: British War Films of the 1950s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 33, 1 (1998), 36.

⁵⁹ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema in the 1950s: The Decline of Deference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2.

more broadly and this study only assesses those productions or publications in which the subject of the US or the Anglo-American relationship is central.⁶⁰

Although this study intends to utilise a synthesis of sources often ignored in accounts of the Anglo-American relationship, there are limitations in the extent that such an approach can only shed light on the discrete political and economic developments of the relationship in quite general terms. This is particularly true given the fact that this thesis does not address American attitudes towards Britain or the Atlantic Alliance. After all, the officials in London and Washington have been central in the evolution of the alliance and also play a role in shaping political culture because of their ability to shape the political agenda and communicate ideas, propaganda and policies on the subject. Given that existing studies have tended to focus on the two governments and foreign policy elites on both sides of the Atlantic, this thesis utilises these sources sparingly. However, it would be mistaken to suggest that the government debate is ultimately unimportant in determining political culture.

Outline

Using this synthesis of sources, it is possible to explore the role of America in British political culture during the long 1950s. It is organised thematically with the five chapters each addressing a theme concerning British commentary about the US. Such a structure captures some of the awkwardness and untidiness of political culture as debates were fluid, not constrained by the institutional limits of particular organisations and various themes cut across several chapters. Chapter One examines British constructions of American politics in order to assess the degree to which commentary was based on the notion that the two countries shared significant political values. By assessing the reporting of US affairs and the divergent British interpretations of its ideological trajectory, it investigates the ways that America's democracy and political life was reported and constructed by observers in the UK. Chapter Two explores the commentary

⁶⁰ Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001); Andrew Hammond, *British Fiction and the Cold War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013); Steven Fielding, *A State of Play: British Politics on Screen, Stage and Page from Anthony Trollope to The Thick of It* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

of American foreign policy in the context of the Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union. It investigates British responses to Washington's international programme and the extent of the opposition to the nascent Anglo-American relationship. Chapter Three examines the effects of the post-war changes in both countries' international positions on British views of the US, addressing the ways in which Britain's 'decline' was measured against Washington's ascendancy. Chapter Four focuses on the responses to the growing co-operation on questions of defence. With Britain increasingly dependent on American research and technology for its 'independent' nuclear deterrent as the decade progressed, this was an issue which at times epitomised doubts about the relationship with the US. As elites, policy-makers and the wider public grappled with questions about nuclear weapons, rearmament, NATO and the leasing of RAF bases to the US Air Force, the commentary frequently revealed underlying assumptions about Britain's ally. Perceptions of American culture are the subject of Chapter Five, particularly the warnings and evolving debates about the Americanisation of British culture.

Ultimately, the thesis argues that the popular fears about the growth in anti-Americanism were exaggerated and in fact more common were attempts to discredit what was perceived as anti-Americanism. Although various issues concerning American politics, culture and foreign policy attracted regular criticism, this was evidence of the unusual amount of attention paid to the US in British political culture. Very few Britons were pathological in their criticisms with even the most hostile able to identify some elements of the country with which they sympathised or drew inspiration. Because of its role as the standard-bearer for modernity but also due to the shared English language, no other country had the same significance in informing policy debates across the Atlantic. Commentary about the US intersected with a constellation of other values, beliefs and ideologies and a pro and anti-American schema is unhelpful given that perspectives evolved according to changing international and domestic circumstances and exigencies.

Chapter One

Land of Liberty?

Whether described as an Anglosphere, the English-speaking peoples or a 'special' Anglo-American relationship, explanations of the ostensible intimacy between Britain and the United States have often pointed to the importance of shared political values. Speaking at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri in 1946, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill outlined the major elements of this common heritage when urging western resistance to the threat from the Soviet Union:

We must never cease to proclaim in fearless tones the great principles of freedom and the rights of man which are the joint inheritance of the English-speaking world and which through the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, the Habeas Corpus, trial by jury, and the English Common law find their most famous expression in the American Declaration of Independence.¹

Churchill's perception that shared liberal values united a transatlantic community was not the only interpretation of the underlying principles of US politics as a diverse range of individuals and organisations sought to identify the traditions governing American domestic life. Nonetheless, it was a construction of the two countries' links which had long been articulated on both sides of the Atlantic and had new relevance with the onset of the Cold War between the liberal democracies of the West and communist USSR. However, as well as there being substantial procedural and ideological differences between the two political systems, British commentary of certain aspects of US democracy was at times regarded as excessive, unfair and anti-American. McCarthyism, institutionalised racism, and the reports of crime and corruption in major cities were just some of the issues which provoked questions as to whether the country's political culture had deviated from the traditions which linked it with Britain. This chapter examines British reporting of American politics and the contrasting ways in which its political and social trajectory was constructed in the long 1950s. It analyses the reasons for these different views

¹ 'Britain and America in Peace', *The Times*, 6 March 1946, 4.

of American domestic affairs and assesses the extent to which Britons identified the existence of an Atlantic community based on shared traditions and beliefs. As will be shown in this chapter, the notion that there were underlying Anglo-American political similarities was invoked by a range of individuals from a variety of ideological backgrounds. Although there were features of American democracy which provoked sustained criticism in Britain, these did not fatally undermine the idea that the two countries shared fundamental values.

Reporting America

In order to understand the nature of British attitudes towards American politics, it is important first to examine the scope and basis of the channels through which information about the country was transmitted to the wider population. This requires analysis of the ways in which the coverage of the US developed as well as the assumptions and backgrounds of the groups and individuals who were pivotal in its development. The Second World War and the growth of the Anglo-American relationship led to increased British focus on politics across the Atlantic. Interest in American politics was well established by Pearl Harbour and Washington's entry into the conflict but the country's growing significance in world affairs led it to receive even greater attention when the war was over. Writing in 1961, historian Arnold Toynbee argued that the whole world had a legitimate interest in American affairs because 'the question of how America is going to acquit herself in her present ordeal is a question of life and death, not just for America herself, but for the whole human race.'² The allied co-operation between the two governments stimulated by the need to resist first Nazi and later Soviet expansionism led to growing demand for information about US domestic life amongst British audiences. In response, the BBC scheduled various radio programmes devoted to the affairs of its ally which included *Let's Get Acquainted*, *It's Different in the USA* and *America Decides*. Amongst the most popular was *American Commentary*, which had been a regular feature in schedules since the 1930s. Presented by American journalist

² Arnold Toynbee, *America and the World Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 2-3.

and broadcaster Raymond Gram Swing, the programme was reportedly heard at one point by a third of the British population with regular listeners including Winston Churchill and King George VI.³

The wartime context within which the subject developed meant that the coverage of American affairs had to be sensitive. With the US entry into the conflict came the stationing of its military personnel in RAF bases in England after 1942 and broadcasts were designed to promote understanding and were careful not to cause the alliance to become strained.⁴ As a result, difficult subjects such as the nature of race relations and segregation were usually ignored or needed to be reported warily. Imperatives relating to the international situation also informed the increase in newspaper coverage of US politics and society. With the Roosevelt administration's intentions in the Second World War uncertain at the time of the fall of France, the British Information Service (BIS) established a propaganda campaign after 1940 to disseminate information about the parlous European situation. Doubts existed in Britain about whether Washington would abandon its neutrality towards affairs in Europe and journalists were used by BIS in the efforts to counter the 'isolationist' groups urging non-intervention.⁵ A consequence of this propaganda offensive was the growth in newspaper attention on US politics and society. In 1940, few national newspapers had correspondents based in New York or Washington, while European positions were the more prestigious appointments. By the end of the 1950s however, a quarter of Britain's foreign news derived from the US as numerous publications sought to expand their American coverage.⁶ The extent of this attention surpassed that reserved for any other foreign country. Throughout the 1950s, most journals and newspapers included sections devoted to US affairs but few were as extensive as the *Daily*

³ Raymond Gram Swing, *Good Evening!* (London: Bodley Head, 1964), 193.

⁴ Sian Nicholas, "'Partners Now': Problems in the Portrayal by the BBC of the Soviet Union and the United States of America, 1939-45", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 3, 2 (1992), 243-71.

⁵ Nicholas Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American "Neutrality" in World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁶ William Clark, *Less than Kin* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), 12.

Express's 'American Column,' which appeared on the third page of every edition and reported the minutiae of the country's life.⁷

The onset of the Cold War meant that the US remained relevant to Britain. Not only was American pre-eminence increasingly apparent but the renewal of diplomatic ties in the late 1940s informed the belief that political trends on Capitol Hill could have profound effects of British foreign policy. With many of the British journalists who began reporting in Washington or New York during wartime continuing to do so after 1945, there seemed to be continuity with the aims of wartime. William Clark, an *Observer* foreign correspondent who graduated from the University of Chicago in 1938 and later served as Prime Minister Anthony Eden's Press Secretary, later reported that the task still involved 'persuading the top-opinion makers that Britain was America's loyal ally in peace as in war.'⁸ One newspaper which managed to assemble an impressive and respected American bureau was the *Manchester Guardian*. Before 1945, it had mainly relied on agencies and other newspapers for its American coverage and its staunchly Atlanticist editor A. P. Wadsworth had been responsible for most of the editorials on the subject despite having never visited the country. By the beginning of the 1950s, however, the newspaper spent more on the American service than the whole of the *Guardian*'s Foreign Service in 1930 and in 1950 cables from America amounted to nearly half of the total number of international reports received in 1938.⁹ Its US correspondent Alistair Cooke and Washington correspondent Max Freedman provided regular despatches despite the technical difficulties associated with providing stories from the US. However, limitations were apparent in the UK's American coverage. The *Sunday Times* only began to employ a foreign editor in 1949 and the *Daily Herald*'s abolition in 1951 of such a position contributed to

⁷ Other examples in newspapers and journals included the *American Mail* in the *Daily Mail* as well as 'Don Iddon's Diary', the regular weekly reports of its Washington correspondent. The *Manchester Guardian* employed Alistair Cooke and after 1953 Max Freedman to cover US affairs but in 1951 abandoned the idea of an 'American Notebook' feature because it could clash with Cooke's *Letter from America* programme on BBC radio. Amongst weekly journals, the *Economist* ran a weekly *American Survey*, *Socialist Commentary* included an occasion 'American Commentary' and business journal *The Statist* ran a weekly *Washington News Letter*.

⁸ William Clark, *From Three Worlds: Memoirs* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986), 32.

⁹ David Ayerst, *Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper* (London: Collins, 1971), 577-8.

the newspaper's poor reputation for international affairs.¹⁰ Even though its own American service only developed in earnest after 1945, the *Manchester Guardian's* journalists were somewhat dismissive of the rival *Daily Telegraph's* use of the Associated Press for their American reports.¹¹

The weight of coverage about the US in the press and media meant that the disagreements between the two countries were extensively reported and in turn could foster resentment towards Americans. A 31 year-old physicist illustrated this point when he reported that 'when I read of the doings and sayings of Americans in the newspapers I get really mad and am inclined to blame the U.S.A. for all the world's troubles today.'¹² More generally, the fall-out from the reporting of diplomatic tension was often mistaken for signs of a prejudiced anti-Americanism. For American columnist Fred Vanderschmidt, the press had done more to create and increase and solidify anti-Americanism than any other medium.¹³ However, this verdict is questionable given the backgrounds and attitudes towards the US of the individuals who shaped the coverage. Contrary to Vanderschmidt's anxieties, many were enthusiastic about their adopted country even before embarking on their first assignments across the Atlantic, something which meant that criticism rarely extended to attacks on the country or its people. Many of those who reported in the formative years of the Cold War had already been based in the US for long enough to sympathise with the country and its population. BBC and *Manchester Guardian* journalist Alistair Cooke made the controversial decision during wartime to become an American citizen and his colleague Leonard Miall described him as 'the real mid-Atlantic man.'¹⁴ *Daily Express* journalist René MacColl remembered his excitement when offered a role with the *Baltimore Sun* in 1926. It seemed, he later noted, 'as if every far-fetched dream in life might be coming true.'¹⁵ Cooke had

¹⁰ Harold Hobson, Phillip Knightley and Leonard Russell, *The Pearl of Days: An Intimate Memoir of the Sunday Times* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972), 259. Huw Richards, *The Bloody Circus* (London: Pluto, 1997), 164.

¹¹ See Letter from Alastair Hetherington to Max Freedman, 22 December 1953, Manchester Guardian Papers, John Rylands Library, Manchester (hereafter MGP).

¹² DR 769, reply to August 1950 Directive, Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex (hereafter MOA).

¹³ Fred Vanderschmidt, *As Others See Us*, 57.

¹⁴ Leonard Miall, *Inside the BBC* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994), 47.

¹⁵ René MacColl, *Dateline and Deadline* (London: Oldbourne, 1952), 19.

witnessed US troops situated close to his home in Blackpool during the First World War and was fanatical about jazz music and the writing of H. L. Mencken. Not all were as enthusiastic and retained stereotypes about Americans despite their experiences of the country. *News Chronicle* journalist Vernon Bartlett, though noting his positive view of the ‘civilised American,’ complained about ‘the effects of chewing gum, ‘comics’, gangster films and motor cars so ostentatiously long that they cannot fit in any normal parking place.’¹⁶ However, living and working in the US could alter the attitudes of the correspondents and C. V. R. Thompson modified some views of Americans whilst serving as the *Daily Express* New York reporter. Despite arriving with a perception that the typical American was brash and materialistic, Thompson concluded in 1939 that ‘I had changed. I was Americanized all right. I was no longer painfully shy, no longer ridiculously reserved, no longer dully placid.’¹⁷

Thompson’s suggestion that his US experience was transformative is one of the reasons for doubting the assertions that the British press was anti-American. With several having lived and worked in the US for several decades by the 1950s, the American-based reporters were frequently reporting on what must have felt like an adopted home. Cooke, MacColl and *Economist* editor Geoffrey Crowther, who had worked for BIS and studied at Yale, were all married to American women. And it was not only American correspondents who had vast experience of the country. *Daily Mail* editor William Hardcastle had worked for Reuters in New York and Washington, conservative journalist Constantine Fitzgibbon was half-American and BBC’s political journalists Ludovic Kennedy and Robin Day had both worked on the East Coast before joining the Corporation. Rather than worrying about anti-Americanism, some British journalists were more perturbed by the emphasis on the US in the press. The *Daily Express*’s Anglo-Canadian editor Lord Beaverbrook believed that the problem was not that there was an excess of criticism about the US but that *The Times* under the ownership of Jack Astor was ‘simply a great propaganda organ directed [...] to some vague idea of Anglo-Saxon union’ and ‘always ready to

¹⁶ Vernon Bartlett, *And Now, Tomorrow* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), 248.

¹⁷ C. V. R. Thompson, *I Lost my English Accent* (New York: Van Rensselaer, 1939), 259.

sacrifice British interests to the States.’¹⁸ However, even the Beaverbrook press, though viewed by Vanderschmidt as amongst the most anti-American newspapers, praised aspects of the US political system. Despite its editor’s complaints about Washington’s foreign policy and Britain’s apparent post-war subservience to the US, the ‘American Column’ often pointed to the affluence of the country’s working class within its capitalist system.¹⁹ Other robust critics of American foreign policies or of its political system retained a degree of admiration for its democratic processes. The regular columns of the *Daily Mirror*’s “Cassandra”, the pen-name of journalist William Connor, were outspoken in their opposition to McCarthyism and in 1954 he described the US as an ‘uneasy, power-soaked, wealth-drugged land.’²⁰ Nonetheless, he was ‘deeply interested’ in the country’s politics and ‘amazed’ by the Presidential conventions which he attended on several occasions.²¹

The geographical location and social circles of the British correspondents also had an effect on the coverage. The speed with which the channels for reporting US life grew after 1940 meant that there were certain geographical, political and social biases. At the beginning of the period, the foreign correspondents of the *Sunday Times* were largely British, male, university educated and their average age was 38.²² As well as being quite a homogeneous group, many of the journalists based in the US were mostly familiar with the cities and elites on the East Coast. Most socialised with their fellow reporters and *Sunday Times* reporter Henry Brandon remembered that on arriving in Washington he was told to ‘establish “connections” with the mighty, and the best way to do that was live near them in Georgetown.’²³ At times this focus meant that events occurring outside of the East Coast were overlooked. As well as predominantly reporting from Washington and New York, questions were also raised as to whether the political prejudices of the Britons in the US affected the commentary. According to *The Times*’ reporter Peregrine

¹⁸ A. J. P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972), 227.

¹⁹ See ‘American Columns’, *Daily Express*, 23 July 1951, 2; 6 March 1952, 2; 9 April 1952, 2.

²⁰ “Cassandra”, ‘Why did he die?’ *Daily Mirror*, 30 April 1954, 4.

²¹ Robert Connor, *Cassandra: Reflections in a Mirror* (London: Cassell, 1969), 98-99.

²² Harold Hobson et al, *The Pearl of Days*, 258.

²³ Henry Brandon, *Special Relationships* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 57.

Worsthorne, the Democrats were significantly more popular than their Republican counterparts and this gave rise to ‘a consensus British view which nobody questioned.’²⁴ The 1952 Presidential Election illustrated this attitude as the victory of Republican Dwight Eisenhower was unexpected by many who predicted the continuation of two decades of Democratic control of the White House. *The Times*’ senior American correspondent John Miller’s reports of the election led editor Sir William Haley to remove the journalist from Washington when his coverage of Democrat Adlai Stevenson was perceived as violating the newspaper’s goal of neutrality.²⁵ In reality, coverage of the election was more balanced as Dwight Eisenhower’s selection as Republican candidate led many to declare neutrality in the election, believing that the former General’s selection showed that American policy would unlikely change as a result of the contest.²⁶ Nonetheless, the urbane Stevenson received many tributes from Britons afterwards, with Cooke later describing him as ‘having mastered the art, far more difficult and rarer than that of a successful politician, musician, actor: success as a human being.’²⁷

Amongst these American correspondents, there was usually concern about the state of the Anglo-American relationship. The published edition of Don Iddon’s *Daily Mail* columns stressed that he had ‘no great aim or theme [...] except possibly a natural endeavour to aid Anglo-American relations by reporting everything with complete candour and frankness.’²⁸ When the alliance seemed to have been damaged by the Suez Crisis in 1956, various British journalists stressed its significance for world politics. Geoffrey Crowther argued that the partnership was ‘not only a desirable thing in itself but also [...] by far the strongest and perhaps the only guarantor of freedom from all-out war.’²⁹ For William Clark, the lessons of the diplomatic disagreement over the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt were not that Britain should pursue a neutral foreign policy but that the two countries would need to develop

²⁴ Peregrine Worsthorne, *Tricks of Memory* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993), 194.

²⁵ Iverach MacDonald, *The History of The Times Volume V: Struggles in War and Peace 1939-1966* (London: Times Books, 1984), 243-5; Worsthorne, *Tricks of Memory*, 143-5.

²⁶ ‘Anglo-American Relations’, *Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1952, 6.

²⁷ Alistair Cooke, *Six Men* (London: Bodley Head, 1977), 179.

²⁸ Don Iddon, *Don Iddon’s America* (London: Falcon, 1951), 9.

²⁹ Geoffrey Crowther, ‘Reconstruction of an Alliance’, *Foreign Affairs*, 35, 2 (1957), 173.

together. Clark, who had resigned as Eden's Press Secretary over the crisis, argued that 'Britain will not gain national security and peace of mind by dissolving or loosening the partnership, but only by making it work, by seeking to be more and more closely mixed up with America.'³⁰ Although the headlines in some sections of the press at the time seemed to indicate tension between the two countries, there were some articles which stressed the need for understanding. Serialised in *The Times* as the crisis erupted in late 1956, Sir William Haley's report of a tour of the US concluded that 'Of all nations, its history has a higher proportion of greatness than of baseness; of all peoples its motives are the least suspect.' Despite the resentment about Suez which was apparent in some sections of the press, Haley stressed that 'Amidst all the dangers that beset us we can be thankful that it is to this dynamic, humorous, impatient, impulsive, generous people there has passed the leadership of the world.'³¹

Augmenting the coverage of these British American correspondents was the writing of US journalists, whose columns could be easily reproduced in the UK. However, the backgrounds of these reporters only added to the geographical and political biases in the British coverage. The BBC employed liberal New Deal reporters such as Joseph and Stewart Alsop and Joseph Harsch for its *American Commentary* and the Corporation's Chairman Lord Simon distinguished these individuals from the 'irresponsible' right-wing commentators such as Drew Pearson, Walter Winchell and Fulton Lewis Jnr.³² Other American journalists who were well-known in Britain were similarly supportive of its culture or political system. Frequent *Spectator* contributor Richard Rovere noted that his ideological background meant that he 'would be some sort of Social Democrat if I lived in a country which had such a movement.'³³ Many were born on the East Coast and were not unfavourable to British life when visiting or later remembered their network of contacts amongst the elite. Writing in 1958, the Alsop brothers recalled their friendships

³⁰ William Clark, *Less than Kin*, 164.

³¹ 'Notes on a Journey: Eisenhower's America', *The Times*, 17 November 1956, 7.

³² Lord Simon, *The BBC from Within* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1953), 229-30.

³³ Todd Kerstetter, 'Rovere, Richard Halsworth', *American National Biography Online*, <http://www.anb.org/articles/16/16-01416.html>, last accessed 6 November 2014.

with politicians from both sides of the House of Commons and, remarking on the deficiencies of Eisenhower's America, claimed 'Give us a Churchill, give us even half a Churchill or quarter of a Churchill, and America will pull the cart over the hill at last, to the grand goals all Americans wish to reach.'³⁴ Walter Lippmann was even known for having espoused the importance of an Atlantic Community in US foreign policy whilst the *New York Times'* London correspondent Drew Middleton and frequent commentator Virginia Cowles were married to Britons, writing sympathetic accounts of their adopted country and its people.³⁵ Ultimately, then, the backgrounds, locations and political views of journalists who made a career out of translating American affairs to Britain meant there were likely to be limits on the extent of anti-Americanism in the press. Although the reporting of diplomatic tensions could foster Anglo-American resentment, this was a sign of the relatively detailed scrutiny to which US affairs was accorded rather than anti-Americanism per se. American affairs were simply more often the subject of debate, controversy and attention than those of any other nation. This focus on US life and its politics was replicated in other areas of Britain's political culture.

Interpreting American Politics

As well as the growing media interest in American affairs, Britain's political parties keenly debated the putative direction and underlying values of US politics. Labour, Conservatives and their ancillary organisations sought to import political or programmatic lessons gleaned from their American counterparts whilst often arguing that the US system corresponded with their own ideas and values. Conservatives were the more natural exponents of this perspective. As politician and historian, Churchill was the figure most associated with this conception of transatlantic intimacy. Published between 1948 and 1958, his multi-volume series *The Second World War* and *The English-Speaking Peoples* stressed the historical importance of the political values of a culture area encompassing Britain, the US, Australia, Canada, and

³⁴ Joseph and Stewart Alsop, *The Reporter's Trade* (London: Bodley Head, 1958), 67

³⁵ Drew Middleton, *The British* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957); Virginia Cowles, *No Cause for Alarm* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1949).

New Zealand.³⁶ With maternal forebears who had fought for the American colonies in the Wars of Independence and shared ancestry with George Washington, Churchill referenced this heritage to encourage contemporary solidarity between the two countries.³⁷ His colleagues and Cabinet ministers Harold Macmillan and Quintin Hogg (Lord Hailsham) shared this Anglo-American background as their mothers were part of a generation of the children of US millionaires who married upper-class Britons. All three figures embarked on high-profile pilgrimages to their ancestral homes during the 1950s and pointed to their transatlantic backgrounds as they stressed the need for Cold War co-operation.³⁸ A qualified barrister, Hailsham focused on the legalistic similarities of the two countries on several visits to Tennessee and in speeches to the American Bar Association. After invoking the supposedly common symbols of the King James Bible, the Magna Carta, William Shakespeare and John Milton, he noted that ‘America is the true born heir of Western Christian civilisation born in its British mode.’³⁹ Fourteen years after Churchill’s speech at Fulton, Hailsham repeated the sentiments of his mentor when he noted at Westminster College that ‘Like America and Europe, Britain is part of Christendom or it is nothing.’⁴⁰

Although such ideas were most frequently articulated in right-wing circles, the notion that Britain and the US were united by common faith in liberal democracy was espoused more widely. Released in 1946 just months after the Fulton speech, audiences at Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger’s *A Matter of Life and Death* would likely have noticed the similarities with Churchill’s

³⁶ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, six volumes (London: Cassell, 1948-53); Winston S. Churchill, *The English-Speaking Peoples*, four volumes (London: Cassell, 1956-8).

³⁷ Martin Gilbert, *Churchill and America* (London: Free Press, 2005), 1-2. During a visit to the US to meet President-Elect Dwight Eisenhower in 1953, Churchill unveiled a plaque outside the former Brooklyn home of his mother Jennie Jerome.

³⁸ Macmillan did this when visiting Spencer, Indiana, the hometown of his mother, Nellie Macmillan in September 1956. D. R. Thorpe, *Supremacy: The Life of Harold Macmillan* (London: Pimlico, 2011 [2010]), 345-6.

³⁹ ‘The Task and the Vision: The Future Belongs to Free Men’, Lord Hailsham speech to American Bar Foundation, 22 February 1958, HLSM 3/8/3/2, Lord Hailsham Papers, Churchill College, University of Cambridge (hereafter CCC). Despite frequently outlining this heritage in the US, Hailsham only briefly mentioned this ancestry in his two memoirs. See Lord Hailsham, *A Sparrow’s Flight: Memoirs* (London: HarperCollins, 1991 [1990]), 20.

⁴⁰ Lord Hailsham, *Interdependence: A Policy for Free Peoples* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1961), 16.

speech. It depicted a celestial trial in which British pilot Peter Carter (David Niven) attempts to convince an American jury that he deserves more time on Earth to spend with a Boston-born woman with whom he fell in love after making radio contact from his burning plane. The directors had explored the subject of Anglo-American affinity in their 1942 film *A Canterbury Tale* and *A Matter of Life and Death* affirmed the Anglo-American faith in the common law and freedoms. Although his prosecutor, a bigoted American killed by Britons at the Battle of Lexington, emphasised differences and tension between the two countries, his defence counsel convinced an all-American jury to grant Carter's request. As well as the grand trial which stressed the mutual respect for justice and the rule of law, the trial ended with an invocation of the two peoples' shared belief in the importance of the rights of the common man.⁴¹ Few 1950s films were as explicit in promoting messages of Anglo-American similarities but productions such as *They Were Not Divided* (1950), *A House in the Square* (1951) and *A Yank in Ermine* (1956) similarly explored the historical and contemporary similarities between the two peoples.

With the Kremlin eager to exploit any tension within the West, portraying the 'special relationship' as based on more enduring factors than *realpolitik* was a way of stressing its resilience to critics. After meeting President Truman in December 1950 at a delicate stage in the Korean War, Prime Minister Clement Attlee spoke on BBC radio about the contrast between the 'common cultural heritage and a common belief in freedom' of the West and the totalitarianism of the USSR.⁴² Although Labour politicians utilised such rhetoric less frequently than their Conservative rivals, its senior figures supported Atlanticist organisations which often emphasised the sentimental basis of the relationship. Endorsed by the Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell and various senior figures within the party, the Friends of the Atlantic Union stressed amongst other things the

⁴¹ The press response to the film was generally favourable despite several reviewers complaining about the American's attacks on Britain's imperial record. Ian Christie, *A Matter of Life and Death* (London: British Film Institute, 2008 [2000]), 59-62.

⁴² Clement Attlee, 'Talk about Visit to United States and Canada', 16 December 1950, BBC Home Service, T25 Radio Scripts Library (hereafter RSL), BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham (hereafter WAC). The Prime Minister's subsequent speech to the House of Commons made similar claims about Anglo-American co-operation being based on their shared democratic heritage. See House of Commons Debate, *Hansard*, 14 December 1950, Volume 482, Columns 1361-2.

importance of the common heritage when it argued for the creation of a parliamentary dimension to NATO. Barbara Ward's 1954 pamphlet written on behalf of the group portrayed the two countries as having 'developed, refined and consolidated the concept of freedom, and steadily extended the physical area over which free methods of government have been practised.'⁴³ Several other groups utilised such arguments as they sought to promote Anglo-American co-operation and communication throughout the 1950s and studies by academics such as George Catlin and the American founder of the Atlantic Union movement Clarence Streit stressed these features.⁴⁴ The fact that NATO forged agreements with Fascist Spain and the authoritarian regime of Syngman Rhee in South Korea did little to diminish the popularity of organisations such as the Society of Pilgrims, the English Speaking Union or the British American Association.

Alongside this belief in the underlying similarities of the Anglo-American democracies, there was fierce debate between the two major parties about the direction of post-war British politics. Within conservative opinion, free enterprise, entrepreneurialism and innovation were cited as the dominant American values.⁴⁵ Returning from a transatlantic trip in 1950, Conservative MP Richard Law was convinced that the American public's high standard of living was the product of its capitalist economic system. Echoing claims often expressed in the right-wing press, Laws concluded from his US experience that 'free enterprise is more efficient as an instrument for producing wealth in abundance, and distributing it more widely, than the European system of reduction, defence and control.'⁴⁶ On the left, the direction of the US was more fiercely contested, corresponding with the rival factions' competing visions of Britain's international position and future economic policy. Although left-wing

⁴³ Barbara Ward, *Interest in Atlantic Union* (London: Friends of Atlantic Union, 1954), 21.

⁴⁴ George Catlin, *The Atlantic Community* (London: Coram, 1959); Clarence Streit, *Union Now! A Proposal for the Federal Union of the Democracies of the North Atlantic* (London: Right Book Club, 1939).

⁴⁵ See David Eccles, HC Deb, *Hansard*, 7 March 1950, Volume 472, Columns 186-7. At the 1950 Conservative Party Conference, Anthony Eden described the US as the foremost free enterprise country. *71st Annual Conference of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations*, 31.

⁴⁶ Richard Law, *Return from Utopia* (London: Faber & Faber, 1950), 76. See also 'American Column' *Daily Express*, 25 July 1951, 2; 27 September 1951, 2; 6 March 1952, 2; 9 April 1952, 2.

analysts were less likely to claim that Anglo-American relations were the product of shared liberalism, many on the left argued that the US was converging with their own version of democratic socialism. As well as celebrating the 1948 re-election of Democratic President Harry Truman as a victory for progressive forces around the world, there was frequent debate in left wing journals as to whether an American socialist party would emerge.⁴⁷ Such preoccupations caused historian D. W. Brogan to complain that the 'British public doesn't want to learn about American politics' and 'prefers to ask silly questions like "When will the Americans get a Labour Party?"'⁴⁸

Impressions of American politics and the content of its underlying values were mainly influenced by an individual's own political position and domestic concerns. In Labour's internal conflict over the post-war co-operation with Washington, divergent portrayals of the US were utilised in support of competing proposals for Britain's foreign policy. Although the party leadership was largely Atlanticist and played an important role in the creation of the 'special relationship,' the British left contained groups and individuals who were sceptical about the diplomatic links with Washington. These differences were particularly evident at the Labour party's 1952 conference, which occurred at the highpoint of factionalism informed by attitudes towards Anglo-American relations. Denis Healey, one of Labour's prominent Atlanticists, asserted that:

America is not run by Wall Street. Wall Street has lost every American election for the past 20 years and it will lose this one. It is not Wall Street that has run America's foreign policy since the war. It has been backed by the 15 million organised workers in the American Labour Movement, and they are our blood brothers.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ In 1951, Norman MacKenzie argued that Labour could still win that year's general election despite trailing in the polls. He claimed that the party 'can still win with the strategy that brought Mr. Truman back against all the odds.' Norman Mackenzie, 'A Way to Win', *New Statesman*, 29 September 1951, 328. See James McCawley, 'Where are these Socialists in America?' *Forward*, 17 September 1955, 7; Walter Reuther, 'Why America Does Not Have a Labour Party', *Forward*, 12 February 1955, 7.

⁴⁸ D. W. Brogan, 'The Education of Dwight D. Eisenhower', *Spectator*, 4 May 1956, 612.

⁴⁹ *Labour Party Annual Conference Report* (hereafter *LPACR*), 123. Similar ideas were outlined in Labour journals supportive of the leadership. See 'Editor's Comments', *Labour Woman*, September 1951, 164.

His characterisation of Britain's ally attempted to answer the criticisms of the party's leadership from the Labour left that American life was dominated by conservative and regressive political forces. By contrast with Healey's claims, other delegates in 1952 lamented the role of the '60 monopolistic families' in the US or the fact that 'in the recent history of politics and trade union life in the United States the pace has been made by the right wing of American Toryism.'⁵⁰ Such ideas about US politics were routinely invoked by individuals on the Labour left who believed that American capitalism was the natural successor of European fascism and for whom Wall Street, Du Pont and Ford were potent symbols of the apparent dominance of big business across the Atlantic.⁵¹ Thus, there was reluctance on the Labour left to accept that the governing classes in the US represented attitudes with which they could sympathise. Kingsley Martin, editor of Labour left journal *New Statesman*, argued that the prominent American unions were 'conservative and not much concerned with preserving the Bill of Rights' and Labour MP John Freeman described American politics as 'politically primitive.'⁵²

British onlookers could usually identify with certain American groups, ideas or individuals regardless of their party affiliation or ideology. Favourable constructions of the country's politics were even invoked by the far left despite its programmatic and ideological hostility towards Washington. At the same time as claiming that the US Government was dominated by conservatism and business elites, there was faith that the general public held different attitudes. Harold Laski's *The American Democracy* described the country as dominated by capitalism and property-ownership, conclusions which one recent commentator regards as demonstrating his naiveté and 'willingness to believe the most outrageous slanders written about America if they fit his thesis.'⁵³ By

⁵⁰ *LPACR 1952*, 119 and 117.

⁵¹ Labour Cabinet Minister Aneurin Bevan argued in 1945 that the US would 'inherit Nazi Germany's position as bulwark and protector of world capitalism in the West.' Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan, 1897-1945* (London: Granada, 1975), 434.

⁵² Kingsley Martin, 'The American Witch-Hunt', *New Statesman*, 5 July 1952, 5; John Freeman and Denis Healey, *Rearmament – How Far?* (London: Fabian Society, 1951), 6.

⁵³ Gary Dean Best, *Harold Laski and American Liberalism* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2005), 153.

interpreting US affairs through the prism of his own ideas, Laski, who was a Marxist writer and a member of Labour's National Executive Committee, shared much with more mainstream figures and he was even optimistic about the country's potential and the prospect of the emergence of another Abraham Lincoln or Franklin Roosevelt. He noted that 'it is hardly possible [...] not to feel that the impersonal forces of the world are shaping American destiny in a democratic direction which no party can deny and yet survive.'⁵⁴ Even the far left celebrated the legacies of certain American figures – who were often establishment figures rather than radicals, communists or socialists. In a critical pamphlet about the state of US politics published in 1953, *Daily Worker* journalist Derek Kartun expressed faith in the influence of the 'real Americans' who included former Presidents Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams and Abraham Lincoln.⁵⁵ In their admiration for these figures they had much in common with the more mainstream sections of British politics, which also invoked the legacies of these men.⁵⁶ Thus, ability to identify some political affinity between the US and Britain was widespread and defied the categories of pro and anti-American because it was practised by both supporters and opponents of the foreign policy relationship.

Lessons from America

As British politicians and officials tackled the socio-economic changes of the post-war era, the US was the country whose experiences were most frequently used as a guide to future developments. When Labour's 'revisionists' lobbied for the reform of the party's socio-economic policies after consecutive election defeats in 1951 and 1955, American lessons were regarded as particularly helpful. Anthony Crosland was amongst the most influential figures from this

⁵⁴ Harold Laski, *The American Democracy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1949), 82. A similar dichotomy was identified by D. N. Pritt, the Stalinist barrister, writer and Labour MP who was expelled from the party for his opposition to the creation of NATO. See D. N. Pritt, *Star Spangled Shadow* (London: Frederick Mueller, 1947), 121.

⁵⁵ Derek Kartun, *USA '53: The Truth behind Eisenhower* (London: People's Printing Press, 1953), 37-9. See also 'Americans to Remember', *Daily Worker*, 7 November 1952, 2.

⁵⁶ See for example Aneurin Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman, *One Way Only* (London: Tribune, 1951), 3; David Rhydderch, 'Meet the Ordinary Americans', *The Clerk*, May-June 1953, 65-7.

faction of the party and used his interpretation of trends across the Atlantic to urge Labour to abandon its totemic commitment to the nationalisation of industry. Crosland's seminal 1956 book *The Future of Socialism* argued that socialists should aim to achieve social equality as opposed to the reorganisation of labour and he frequently cited the US, rather than social democratic Sweden, as an example of the classless society which Britain should emulate. Recent economic growth and the resulting higher standards of living in the US were regarded as having eased class conflict and produced a less stratified education and social system than that of Britain. Emphasising like many on the left the importance of Roosevelt's New Deal and the redistributive Tennessee Valley Authority, Crosland noted that these policies had ensured that 'the natural bias of the electorate is, as in Britain, towards a little left of centre.'⁵⁷ The election in 1952 of Republican President Dwight Eisenhower did little to diminish this faith and Labour colleague Hugh Dalton summarised Crosland's viewpoint as 'if socialism = a classless society, isn't the US more socialist than UK?'⁵⁸ As the decade continued and Labour's intra-party economic and foreign policy debates intensified as it remained in opposition, the arguments and analysis of American theorists such as J. K. Galbraith and Daniel Bell were used by left-wing politicians to justify their prescriptions for the party's future programme. For Stephen Brooke, such texts by US writers 'became a weapon to be lobbed, like a grenade, not at the Conservative enemy but at one's nominal comrades in the Labour movement.'⁵⁹

This supposed universal applicability of American lessons to a British context was mainly the result of the US's international power, influence and symbolic position as the home of modernity. However, the implicit assumption of these efforts to learn from American politics was the idea that the two systems were sufficiently similar for ideas, techniques or methods to be transported across the Atlantic. The Anglo-American Council on Productivity (AACP), which funded trips for business and union representatives to study the

⁵⁷ C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), 223.

⁵⁸ Ben Pimlott (ed), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-40, 1945-60*, 5 January 1955 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 643.

⁵⁹ Stephen Brooke, 'Atlantic Crossing? American Views of Capitalism and British Socialist Thought 1932-1962', *Twentieth Century British History*, 2, 2 (1991), 111.

conditions of their counterparts across the Atlantic, showed that a similar desire to draw inspiration from the US existed outside of the political parties. Established as a part of Marshall Aid, the project led to the funding of sixty-six British teams to experience American industrial conditions. According to American official Paul Hoffman, 'aid in dollars could be no more than a temporary palliative' for Europe without increases in industrial output and an important task was 'bringing labour along to see where their true interests lay.'⁶⁰ Such comments have led to the AACP sometimes being regarded as an example of American hegemony over Western Europe and Washington's ability to alter attitudes by inculcating managerial and productivity techniques within industry and deradicalising the labour movement.⁶¹ Indeed, the scheme attracted some contemporary criticism on these grounds from the far left or from others who questioned some British workers' enthusiasm for American techniques. In a lecture to the Fabian Society in 1950, Richard Crossman challenged the idea that any lessons could be easily transported:

It is very dangerous to assume that the economic incentives of a competitive society will necessarily increase the production of a society which has always believed far more in team work, in collaboration, and in the many other values beyond the acquisition of more wealth and a larger motor car than your neighbour.'⁶²

Judging by the extensive reports of the AACP in trade union and business journals, few were in fact reluctant, coerced or pressured to imbibe examples from the US. The official reports of the trips sold hundreds of thousands of copies and were widely debated in British industry. Many of these accounts stressed the intangible 'zip' or 'drive' of Americans, impressions which added to the conviction on the soft left that the US experienced less industrial tension

⁶⁰ Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: Britain, America and the Reconstruction of Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 143.

⁶¹ Anthony Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).

⁶² R. H. S. Crossman, *Socialist Values in a Changing Civilisation* (London: Fabian Society, 1951), 5.

than Britain.⁶³ A report in the National and General Municipal Workers' journal described the affinity between worker and employee, noting that 'each addressed the other on the most familiar basis and this did not seem to lessen the discipline of the workers' who 'believed in putting in a full day's work and fully appreciated that the prosperity of the firm ultimately determined their wages contract.'⁶⁴ Such conclusions and recommendations that Britain adopt time-and-motion studies or specialisation were often advanced to make positive comparisons with the domestic situation by commentators who suspected that British industry was stifled by striking unions. After visiting US coal mines, a journalist for the Gaitskellite revisionist journal *Socialist Commentary* reported how refreshing was 'the lack of bitterness in an industry that has seen harder times and more bloody battles than our own.'⁶⁵ Industrial lessons from American companies were thought to be a panacea for various ills. Economist Graham Hutton — in a book which summarised the findings of the AACP — regarded American-style productivity as a panacea that could result in reduced working hours, a reduced economic burden of defence spending, lower taxes and increased personal savings.⁶⁶ As Hutton once noted, all of this could be achieved without the sacrifice of British traditions and customs. On BBC radio in 1951, he stressed that 'Europeans can be richer and better-off in every way without having to chew gum, play American games, or drink and think like Americans.'⁶⁷

Not all sections of the trade union movement were as convinced about the necessity of the AACP or as positive about the calls for the automation of industry in 1955-6 which were made with reference to the US experience. Nonetheless, even opponents used American lessons to justify their prescriptions for Britain's socio-economic policies. The far left was predictably the most critical, deriding the experiment as evidence of the ills of capitalism.

⁶³ J. F. Eccles, 'USA: Controversial Country', *National Union of General and Municipal Workers' Journal* (hereafter *NUGMWJ*), February 1957, 36-7.

⁶⁴ A. Watling, 'Anglo-American Council on Productivity: Hot Dip Galvanizing Team', *NUGMWJ*, April 1951, 102.

⁶⁵ Sid Chaplin, 'Yankee Miner', *Socialist Commentary*, April 1956, 8-9.

⁶⁶ Graham Hutton, *We Too Can Prosper: The Promise of Productivity* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953).

⁶⁷ Graham Hutton, 'The Real Reason of American Wealth', 12 November 1951, BBC European Service, T238 RSL, WAC.

Metal Worker, the journal of the communist-led Engineering and Allied Shop Stewards trade union, suspected that the purpose of the AACP was ‘to place before the working class a line of bilge that will take our minds off the class struggle and attempt to kid us to maintain capitalism and the capitalist modes of production in the interests of the capitalist.’⁶⁸ The enthusiasm of the trade union leaders and industrial managers for the American system as well as the glamour and high salaries of their US counterparts was not always shared by the manual workers, few of whom were involved in trips across the Atlantic. In a 1950 BBC Home Service programme about the AACP, an industrial worker from Coventry was less favourable than his fellow speakers who had visited the US. Anticipating shortened work breaks and increased speed of production, he was reluctant to accept advice from a system which ‘reduces the worker’s status to something like an appendage to a machine.’⁶⁹

Regardless of an individual’s attitudes towards the socio-economic changes of the 1950s, the US was regarded as portentous of Britain’s future. When the possible automation of industry received extensive discussion in the middle of the decade, *Tribune* correspondent John Lawrence was typical in pointing to the American example. A sceptic about automation, Lawrence reported that, despite some increases in industrial efficiency, in the US it had resulted in worsened labour conditions, unemployment, and the extension of the working week.⁷⁰ With Labour and the TUC supportive of the controlled introduction of automation, others on the soft left conversely pointed to more positive examples from the US. The *Daily Mirror*’s series of articles about the ‘Robot Revolution’ in British industry stressed the favourable consequences of automation. Dismissing anxieties about the loss of jobs and emphasising the increased leisure time and education opportunities for workers, it outlined the testimony of a satisfied Ohioan manufacturer of vacuum cleaner wheels.⁷¹ In trade union journals which favoured the introductions of these processes, the supportive

⁶⁸ ‘More Time and Motion Study, says U.S.-T.U.C. Report’, *Metal Worker*, November 1950, 6.

⁶⁹ ‘Taking Stock: Can we Learn from America?’ 30 November 1950, BBC Home Service, T527 RSL, WAC.

⁷⁰ John Lawrence, ‘A New Dawn for Mankind: The Word is Automation’, *Tribune*, 10 June 1955, 1.

⁷¹ ‘But what about me?’ *Daily Mirror*, 28 June 1955, 10-11.

speeches of US union leaders were extensively reported and pictures of automated American plants were given prominence.⁷²

It was not only socio-economic lessons that could be gleaned by study of American politics as by the mid-1960s both political parties had also become eager to learn from US political practices. Initially, the Conservatives were more alert to the possibilities of importing the relevant techniques and methods. During the 1952 Presidential Election, the party collected ephemera from both the Democratic and Republican campaigns and its MP John Profumo travelled to the US to observe the electioneering techniques utilised by both organisations.⁷³ Reporting for the party's Research Department on the methods of the American parties, Profumo claimed that there was 'no apparent move to the Left' in the US, whose life was 'based on private enterprise.'⁷⁴ He reported the innovative and effective use of television by Adlai Stevenson and the popularity of the teleprompter, predicting that the medium would soon be employed in Britain.⁷⁵ Profumo's analysis of American lessons was evidently deemed useful given that the party repeated the exercise in 1956, when Donald Kaberry provided a detailed report of a trip to the US. Conservative Vice-Chairman, Kaberry doubted whether the party could 'usefully copy' much of what he witnessed and revealed his snobbery about the system when he stressed the limitations imposed by the 'different scale of expenditure here and our more grown-up habits in relation to elections.' What did impress Kaberry was the Republicans' use of television briefing books for its candidates, the use of pin badges and coffee-party meetings and he recommended that these could be emulated by Conservative campaigners.⁷⁶

The aversion to commercialism and advertising on the left initially deterred greater study of America's political methods. Writing in 1957, fervent critic of

⁷² 'Robot Revolution can bring four day week', *The Garment Worker*, November 1955, 254; 'Automation: What are its Problems?' *Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers' Journal*, August 1956, 360-3.

⁷³ For the Conservative Party's US election ephemera see CCO 4/5/142-3, CPA.

⁷⁴ John Profumo, 'United States Presidential Election Campaign 1952', 13 November 1952, CCO 4/5/141, CPA.

⁷⁵ John Profumo, 'Television in Politics', *Tory Challenge*, March 1953, 9.

⁷⁶ Donald Kaberry, 'Notes on a Visit to the Headquarters and Other Offices of the Republican and Democratic Parties in Washington DC and other centres, during the last fortnight of the American Presidential Election, 1956', 20 February 1957, CCO 4/7/147, CPA.

consumerism and mass production Aldous Huxley referred to the US when he asserted that the ‘methods now being used to merchandise the political candidate as though he were a deodorant, positively guarantee the electorate against hearing the truth about anything.’⁷⁷ Even the sections of the Labour Party that were sympathetic towards the US and a close Anglo-American alliance were reluctant to utilise American lessons too overtly. In 1958, Patrick Gordon Walker, a broadly Atlanticist future Foreign Secretary, complained about the use by Conservatives of the advertising agency Colman, Prentis and Varley and his rivals’ focus on American politics. With Kaberry’s report having been referenced at that year’s Conservative Party conference, Gordon Walker believed that this was ‘bringing about the worst sort of Americanization of our public life.’⁷⁸ Labour’s electoral misfortune during the 1950s encouraged greater engagement with ideas imported from across the Atlantic. As well as the growing perception that the party could learn ideological lessons from its American counterparts, the dynamism of John F. Kennedy, Democratic Presidential candidate in 1960, encouraged study of the reasons for his popularity. For Labour MP Betty Boothroyd, who worked for several Democratic Senate campaigns, it offered the opportunity ‘to be on the winning side for once and come back energised and better able to change the face of British politics.’⁷⁹ That year’s campaign prompted wider calls for other US innovations to be adopted in British contests. Following the first televised Kennedy-Nixon debates in September, the *Daily Mirror* editorialised that this was ‘the Twentieth Century way to use TV for exciting, democratic electioneering,’ comparing it favourably with Britain’s ‘hidebound’ political productions.⁸⁰ The press diligently reported the encounters between the two candidates and several journalists concluded that the debates were the decisive factors in Kennedy’s ultimate victory, a judgement which encouraged questions

⁷⁷ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (London, Vintage, 2004 [1958]), 174.

⁷⁸ Patrick Gordon Walker, HC Deb, 5 November 1958, *Hansard*, Volume 594, Column 977.

⁷⁹ Betty Boothroyd, *The Autobiography* (London: Century, 2001), 54.

⁸⁰ ‘Politics with a Punch’, *Daily Mirror*, 28 September 1960, 2.

about whether a similar event would be held during the next British general election.⁸¹

Democratic Differences

Despite the fact that political debate in both countries was conducted within a two-party system with regular elections, British attempts to portray their ideas as comparable with the US were at times belied by important constitutional, ideological and procedural differences between the two democracies. After achieving independence, the American system abandoned the rigid class hierarchy, state religion, monarchy and tradition which persisted in Britain. Instead, a political process was established which was particularly responsive to public opinion and had attracted the criticism of wealthy British conservatives who were frequent visitors during the nineteenth century. During the 1950s, the regularity of American elections and separation of the branches of federal government encouraged many Britons to describe Washington or the US population as temperamental, unstable or capricious. With the growth of a close intergovernmental relationship between the two countries, there were anxieties about Britain's association with a potentially erratic system. Labour MP Tom Driberg noted in 1953 that 'the trouble with America is that there is always an election pending.'⁸² At the climax of the 1952 Presidential Election, there were some complaints in Britain about the effect of the contest on American foreign policy. The *Spectator* complained about the 'sense of vacuum created when America has for a brief interval to mark time in her diplomatic activity' whilst the *News Chronicle* described the 'paralysis' in the country during the campaign which affected British foreign policy.⁸³

With Washington's economic and military seniority within the Anglo-American relationship increasingly apparent as the 1950s progressed, there was anxiety that developments in US politics could damage Britain. Because

⁸¹ Ian Gilmour, 'Let's Go', *Spectator*, 11 November 1960, 722; René MacColl, 'Nixon's Biggest Blunder', *Daily Express*, 7 November 1960, 10.

⁸² Tom Driberg, HC Deb, *Hansard*, Volume 522, Column 643. He added that 'Some people might add that the trouble about Russia is that there is never an election pending.'

⁸³ 'The American Vacuum', *Spectator*, 31 October 1952, 556-7; 'Three Letters', *News Chronicle*, 2 November 1952, 2.

Senators, Congressmen and military personnel had a more overtly political role in the US, these figures were at times thought to play too great a role in determining American policy. Author and politician Harold Nicolson expressed these concerns when he complained about the prospect that British ‘life and property may be placed in danger by one of those emotional gusts that eddy round the capitol at Washington.’ Particularly troubling was the possibility that ‘our policies might be deflected by some twist in American politics or some Senator who is unknown to us and whom we are unable to remove.’⁸⁴ Exacerbating these concerns about the constitutional arrangements of the US political system was the fact that there were important ideological differences between both democracies. Although consensus broadly defined both countries’ experiences of the 1950s, Britain’s post-war settlement based on the pursuit of full employment and a mixed economy was markedly different to the US emphasis on economic competition within a free market. As a 63 year-old retired civil servant noted, ‘They err by being too much to the right in politics and their detestation of socialism does not make for a better understanding [sic] with other countries.’⁸⁵ In trade union and left-wing journals, there was frequent criticism of the American privatised medical system and a *Tribune* journalist reported in 1953 about the unnecessary procedures and operations conducted, concluding that ‘in a competitive society the hospitals have to supply a competitive service, and damn the risk to the patient just as long as the beds are full!’⁸⁶ Added to this was the sense of superiority felt by British politicians towards their American counterparts. Assessing the legacy of President Roosevelt in 1955, Richard Crossman was not untypical in arguing that he was ‘the intellectual inferior of all our twentieth century Prime Ministers, with the possible exception of Bonar Law’ and had ‘no respect for intellect or for ideas.’⁸⁷

Besides the constitutional and ideological differences which caused concern in Britain, the apparent frequency of crime, corruption and gangsterism in the

⁸⁴ Harold Nicolson, ‘Marginal Comment’, *Spectator*, 27 April 1951, 552.

⁸⁵ DR 117, reply to August 1950 Directive, MOA.

⁸⁶ Richard Sinclair, ‘It’s best to stay fit in America!’, *Tribune*, 24 April 1953, 3.

⁸⁷ R. H. S. Crossman, ‘Roosevelt – Warts and All’, *New Statesman*, 13 April 1957, 489.

US could damage the impression that the two countries shared democratic traditions. Despite the left-wing confidence that the two political systems were converging, American labor experienced a reversal of the gains achieved during the New Deal. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 prohibited nationwide collective bargaining and trade unionists were required to sign statements saying they were not members of the Communist party. Moreover, the Kefauver and McClellan Committees received international attention when they investigated the extent of corruption and gangsterism in trade unions and urban areas. The latter led to the allegations of violence against the Teamsters union and its President Jimmy Hoffa becoming well-known in Britain. For Ben Roberts, a speaker on the subject for the BBC's Third Programme in 1959, it seemed far removed from anything evident in Britain as he remarked it 'is difficult to believe that a trade union leader could get away with this type of behaviour in Britain.'⁸⁸ For communists, this was ample evidence that Britain should avoid American advice or emulate its democracy but such problems were at times wilfully ignored by their left-wing colleagues.⁸⁹ At a meeting of the TUC's International Committee in May 1955, the National Union of Mineworkers moved that a protest be registered against 'action being taken in America against trade unions under the Taft-Hartley Act.' Rejecting this suggestion, the committee pointed to the far left background of the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers as a reason to doubt the veracity of these claims.⁹⁰ Journalists and officials often encouraged the conclusion that the crimes and offences of those being investigated did not represent the majority of American unionists. In 1957, American auto-worker boss Walter Reuther's comments at the TUC at a time when the practices of American unions were the subject of scrutiny were similarly designed to ease concerns about corruption in

⁸⁸ Ben Roberts, 'The American Unions under Scrutiny', 25 November 1959, Third Programme, T438 RSL WAC

⁸⁹ *Metal Worker*, the journal of the Communist-led Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards, was particularly critical of the desire to look across the Atlantic for policy lessons and regarded the US as still dominated by capitalism. See Les Smith, 'Your Friend and Mine—The Boss', *Metal Worker*, October 1951; 'Ford and Briggs Named', *Metal Worker*, April 1952, 7; 'More Time and Motion Study, says U.S.-T.U.C. Speed Up Report', *Metal Worker*, November 1950, 6.

⁹⁰ Minutes of the TUC International Committee, 9 May 1955, MSS 292/901/10, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (hereafter MRC).

America's largest union. His suggestion that the corruption was the work of a 'small minority' and he promised that the AFL-CIO would 'drive from our movement every crooked racketeer' was widely endorsed by Labour's allies in the press.⁹¹

McCarthyism

McCarthyism — the strand of anti-communism based on unsubstantiated charges and personal defamation — was the subject of extensive coverage in Britain and had the capacity to erode confidence in the US's liberal democracy. Of all the differences between the two systems, this was one of the more problematic. British eagerness to resist Soviet expansionism did not to the same degree extend to political attacks on academics, intellectuals and celebrities and various Americans sought refuge from the 'witch-hunts' in Britain.⁹² Joseph McCarthy, the junior Senator from Wisconsin whose name was associated with anti-communism, was unpopular across the Atlantic. A Mass Observation (M-O) poll conducted at the height of his notoriety in 1954 concluded that '[t]he general tone is against McCarthy' as 'few indeed showed themselves to be in sympathy with him.' However, it stressed the nuances that existed in the coverage, noting that as few as one in six Britons could provide salient details about the Senator's career and noting that the criticism 'constituted a jibing form of scorn' rather than 'really bitter scolding.'⁹³ Objections to this aspect of the US political climate were most frequently voiced in left-wing circles whose ideological counterparts were subjected to the most anti-communist scrutiny. McCarthyism only served to increase doubts about the nature of democracy within a capitalist system and *New Statesman* editor Kingsley Martin described the 'witch-hunt' as 'rewarding mediocrity, cowardice, and sycophancy and

⁹¹ *TUC Report 1957*, 372. See Richard Crossman, 'Crossman Says ...', *Daily Mirror*, 6 September 1957, 4; John Sampson, 'It's the people versus the Mobsters', *Daily Herald*, 7 September 1957, 5.

⁹² Steve Parsons, 'British 'McCarthyism' and the Intellectuals', in Jim Fyfe (ed), *Labour's Promised Land? Culture and Society in Labour Britain 1945-51* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), 224-46.

⁹³ FR/50, Mass Observation Bulletin, 'In the News', March 1954, 8-11, MOA.

silencing independent and creative talent.’⁹⁴ Past injustices against American radical and working class *causes-célèbre* such as Joe Hill, Sacco and Vanzetti and Tom Mooney were linked with McCarthyism and the *Daily Mirror*’s “Cassandra” even stated that it was ‘promoted by the same psychological background’ as Nazi anti-Semitism.⁹⁵ Liberals, socialists and communists alike challenged the accuracy of the conviction for perjury of former State Department official Alger Hiss, claiming that the extent of the post-war anti-communism prevented a fair hearing of his case.⁹⁶

For supporters of the close Anglo-American foreign policy relationship, McCarthyism caused frustration more because he was closely associated with the ‘isolationist’ wing of the Republican Party. When McCarthy rose to international prominence in early 1950, his ascent was interpreted by many in Britain as potentially damaging to Washington’s involvement in Western Europe. The *Manchester Guardian* stressed that it ‘adds up to a very unhappy situation for America’s allies’ and there were anxieties that the bipartisanship of the early Cold War might have ended.⁹⁷ With the Republicans having been out of the White House for almost twenty years, McCarthy’s claims about the pervasiveness of communism in the State Department were just one element of the mounting attacks on President Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson. However, concerns in Britain were often offset by confidence that the ‘witch-hunts’ would be transient with the press coverage of McCarthy describing the Senator as unrepresentative of majority values in the US. Discussing his 1946 election to the Senate, the *Economist* explained that it was ‘what must be accepted as a moment of aberration.’⁹⁸ This perception was encouraged by the American journalists reporting in Britain. In one of the first accounts of his anti-communist allegations, *American Commentary* presenter

⁹⁴ Kingsley Martin, ‘The American Witch Hunt’, *New Statesman*, 5 July 1952, 5-6. See also George Thomson, ‘That Man McCarthy: How he Rose to Power’, *Forward*, 23 May 1953, 1 and 8. Leslie Hale’s 1955 account was broader in its discussion of the historical and contemporary injustices of the American legal system. Leslie Hale, *Thirty who were Tried* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1955).

⁹⁵ “Cassandra”, ‘The Big Bad Voice of America’, *Daily Mirror*, 18 May 1953, 1 and 8.

⁹⁶ Alistair Cooke, *A Generation on Trial* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1951), Earl Jowitt, *The Strange Case of Alger Hiss* (New York: Doubleday, 1953).

⁹⁷ ‘Uncertainty’, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 March 1950, 6.

⁹⁸ ‘Washington Loyalties’, *Economist*, 25 March 1950, 653.

Stewart Alsop reported that 'The McCarthy's in American political life are still a very small minority, but after this affair it may well [become] smaller simply because McCarthy has been made to look very silly'.⁹⁹

These widely articulated ideas all conflict with the view advanced by John Rossi which suggests that anti-Americanism 'was given an enormous boost in Britain by McCarthy's career.'¹⁰⁰ Although the Senator was unpopular with both elites and the public across the Atlantic, the 'witch-hunt' could nonetheless be reconciled with the idea that the US's democracy was shaped by values and beliefs similar to those of Britain. There was faith that McCarthy would ultimately be defeated even when the Senator's popularity and importance increased. Various politicians including Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, Dean Acheson, Adlai Stevenson and journalist Ed Murrow were regarded as individuals who could defeat McCarthy. These figures were portrayed as the responsible, mature or sane majority which would inevitably resist the goals of the rash, demagogic or lunatic fringe. As Britain's Ambassador to Washington Oliver Franks noted in his initial reports of the phenomenon '[it] is difficult to believe that the American public can take Senator McCarthy's charges seriously' and 'McCarthy's antics are not overly important in themselves and they do not command the approval of responsible Republicans.'¹⁰¹ The fact that Eisenhower ranked amongst the likely bulwarks against McCarthy is demonstrative that Britons failed to appreciate the extent of the 'witch-hunt.' When the President was criticised for his stance of the subject, it was more often for his vacillation and inaction rather than complicity in the regnant anti-communism.¹⁰² However, Eisenhower had been eager in practice to exploit the

⁹⁹ Stewart Alsop, 'American Commentary', 15 March 1950, T8 RSL, WAC

¹⁰⁰ John P. Rossi, 'The British Reaction to McCarthyism, 1950-54', *Mid-America: An Historical Review*, 70, 1 (1988), 5-6.

¹⁰¹ Oliver Franks Weekly Political Summary, 16 March 1950 and 1 April 1950, FO 371/81611, National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA). In his 1954 Reith Lecture, Franks remained confident that 'it would take far more than we have seen to undermine permanently the principles of individual freedom which were written into the American Constitution and have formed the living tradition of the United States for nearly 200 years. American democracy has vitality and toughness, though in its frightened response to the enemy within it has done things it will wish undone.' Oliver Franks, 'The Atlantic Bridge', 21 November 1954, BBC Online Reith Lecture Transcripts, http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/radio4/transcripts/1954_reith3.pdf, last accessed 21 January 2015.

¹⁰² See for example John Walters, 'The Appalling Failure of Eisenhower', *Daily Mirror*, 11 March 1954, 1.

Senator's popularity in his presidential campaign and in office sought to outdo McCarthy in tackling subversive activities in the government.¹⁰³ British judgements often dismissed the idea that such anti-radical and anti-subversive attitudes were deep-seated in US ideology and presented its public as normally opposed to McCarthy. On the BBC radio panel programme *Behind the News* in 1953, historian Alan Bullock rejected the criticism of McCarthyism from popular scientist Jacob Bronowski and outlined the reasons that the Senator would be defeated. He was confident that 'the good sense of the American people and their courage and defence of civil rights will rescue them ... I think that the Americans will come through and come up.'¹⁰⁴

Even some of the people who acquired a reputation for anti-Americanism because of their criticism of American anti-communism were often reluctant to admit that the witch-hunts had fatally undermined or called into question US democracy. Director Charlie Chaplin had lived in America since the 1920s but was refused re-entry to the country in 1952 because of doubts about his political past and his treatment attracted criticism in Britain. In his 1957 film *A King in New York* which depicted the experience in the US of European monarch King Shahdov, Charlie Chaplin's character mocked the 'witch-hunts' as well as the US education system and celebrity culture. In a juxtaposition often used by British satirists and commentators, Shahdov's experience of American life contrasted with his expectation and excitement when first seeing the Statue of Liberty. Released in the year of McCarthy's death, the film caused renewed debate about McCarthyism. However, Chaplin stopped short of suggesting that US anti-communism was representative of a permanent trend in American politics. Chaplin was reported as having stated in a press conference 'I'm sure American democracy will function' and in *A King in New York* American television specialist Ann Kay (Dawn Addams) advised Shahdov 'Don't judge by what's going today. It's a passing phase.'¹⁰⁵ This was a mild critique, and as

¹⁰³ Jeff Broadwater, *Eisenhower and the Anti-Communist Crusade* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁴ 'Behind the News-3', 25 November 1953, T35 RSL, WAC.

¹⁰⁵ 'London Greets Mr. Chaplin', *Manchester Guardian*, 24 September 1952, 7.

Andrew Sarris has noted the film ‘seemed remarkably gentle, wistful, and affectionate, in view of the treatment he had received.’¹⁰⁶

Chaplin was one of many prominent victims of the ‘witch-hunts’ who gained attention in Britain but few incidents better demonstrated the caution in the British criticism of McCarthyism than the execution in June 1953 of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. The radical Jewish couple from New York were convicted in 1951 of conspiracy to commit atomic espionage and despite initially attracting little attention in Britain by 1953 it was an important battleground in the cultural Cold War. The far left incorporated the case into its criticism of Washington and an international campaign for clemency was launched with street-protests apparent in London, Manchester and Birmingham with various trade unions and individual campaigners supporting the claims that the Rosenbergs were innocent and had been given an unfair trial. For anti-communist Cold Warriors, this was an obvious example of anti-Americanism because the critics eschewed opportunities to make the same complaints about Soviet human rights abuses.¹⁰⁷ However, it was the relative availability of details about the Rosenbergs’ case rather than a surfeit of anti-Americanism that was responsible for the attention it generated. Moreover, responses to the incident did not easily fit within an anti and pro-American dichotomy. After all, the National Rosenberg Defence Committee (NRDC) which was established to direct the British campaign for clemency had strong links with their American counterparts and invoked US political icons in their protests. In Parliament Square, a sign placed next to the statue of Abraham Lincoln read ‘Lincoln would say that the Rosenbergs should not die’ and by the monument to Roosevelt in Grosvenor Square a wreath read ‘That Roosevelt’s ideals shall live – the Rosenbergs must not die.’¹⁰⁸ Though critics dismissed these displays as a cynical effort to court public opinion, it was consistent with the far left’s belief that the American population could transform the direction of US democracy.

¹⁰⁶ Andrew Sarris, *Politics and Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 49.

¹⁰⁷ Lucy Dawidowicz, ‘The Rosenberg Case: Hate-America Weapon’, *New Leader*, 23 December 1952, 13.

¹⁰⁸ ‘QC’s Rosenberg Challenge’, *Daily Worker*, 17 June 1953, 1; ‘Londoners Besiege the U.S. Embassy’, *Daily Worker*, 15 June 1953, 1.

It was the soft left for which the Rosenberg case caused the most difficulties as conservatives were mostly convinced of the couple's guilt. For Labour and the Trades Union Congress, however, disapproval about McCarthyism had to be balanced with the desire to preserve the Anglo-American relationship and avoid offending Washington. Various politicians who had been critical of McCarthy's ideas about American foreign policy were quick to dismiss the Rosenbergs' case. Despite having caused a transatlantic dispute only a month earlier for criticising the Senator for having contributed to stalling Korean War peace negotiations, Labour leader Clement Attlee denounced suggestions by the far left that Britain should respond to the executions by evicting the US Air Force from RAF bases.¹⁰⁹ The wider left-wing criticism of the executions was more motivated by opposition to capital punishment — a live issue in Britain itself — than the desire to injure the US's international reputation and it was this element of the case that attracted reproach from more mainstream circles. As *Tribune*, a journal on the Labour left which was hostile towards the Anglo-American relationship, noted, the 'real moral of the affair is that once again the barbaric nature of the death sentence is proved.'¹¹⁰ With several trade unions endorsing the calls for clemency, the TUC was forced to respond to queries about the subject by stressing that the couple had had a fair trial and were guilty of 'treasonable activity.'¹¹¹ Other unionists were outspoken in their calls for restraint in criticising US decision-making. One speaker at the far-left led Fire Brigades Union conference warned his fellow delegates of the dangers of passing a resolution which criticised the Rosenbergs' execution. As well as characterising the NRDC campaign as 'extremely left' he advised that rebuking American action would 'do nothing but harm our relations with the United States.'¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Clement Attlee, HC Deb, *Hansard*, 25 June 1953, Volume 516, Columns 2094-8. See also Minutes of the Parliamentary Labour Party, 25 June 1953, LHASC.

¹¹⁰ 'The Rosenbergs', *Tribune*, 26 June 1953, 4.

¹¹¹ Letter from TUC International Department to Luton and District Trades Council, 10 January 1953, MSS.292/973/5, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (hereafter MRC).

¹¹² *Report of the Thirty Fourth Annual Conference of the Fire Brigades Union*, 1953, 49.

The “Negro Problem”

The segregation and discrimination of African-Americans was another subject which was particularly difficult to reconcile with the perception that the US was a liberal democracy or country which shared values and traditions with Britain. White supremacy was the basis for social interaction in Southern American states and public facilities were legally segregated by race at the start of the 1950s. Lynchings — the abductions and murders of black citizens by groups of white men — were less frequent than during the nineteenth century but the fact that they continued demonstrated the modest progress in furthering civil rights. This was often a source of British criticism and a 53 year old housewife complained to M-O that Americans ‘sing of freedom but lynch negroes.’¹¹³ Although it had experienced racial controversies in the Commonwealth — most notably with the Seretse Khama case at the beginning of the decade — there were marked differences between the two countries’ racial compositions. Compared with the Deep South where over a third of some states’ populations were African-American, post-war Britain was relatively homogeneous and white. The black immigrants who arrived in large numbers during the 1950s were confined to a handful of port cities, meaning that few of the white British majority regularly interacted with the socially and geographically isolated minority communities.¹¹⁴

Throughout the 1950s, British attitudes towards American race relations were entangled with the cultural Cold War. As both Washington and Moscow sought to prove the superiority of their political and social systems, the status of African-Americans was a contentious issue. Anxious that racial incidents could damage the reputation of its democracy overseas, the US Government sought to project positive aspects of the situation through the United States Information Agency (USIA). Published in the early 1950s, *The Negro in American Life* was typical in emphasising the progress made on racial questions. Including

¹¹³ R/4014, Response to August 1950 Directive, MOA. For more on the subject during the Second World War see Graham Smith, *When Jim Crow met John Bull* (London: Tauris, 1987); David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (New York: Random House, 1995), 216-37.

¹¹⁴ For a contemporary survey of British race relations see Anthony H. Richmond, *The Colour Problem* (London: Penguin, 1955).

photographs of racially integrated schools and urban areas, it described legal and educational reforms as the basis of recent advancements.¹¹⁵ With both superpowers keen to appeal to the non-aligned world in Asia and Africa, the Kremlin and its satellite communist parties used any signs of tension to attack western democracy. In the early 1950s, the cases involving the Martinsville Seven and Willie McGee, who on the basis of questionable evidence were executed for the rape of white women, led to international campaigns by the far left. For commentators from this section of British politics already hostile towards American capitalism, this was another justification for their contempt. Harold Laski noted that the situation for African-Americans could not improve 'until its citizens have displaced the business man as the idol to be worshipped in its marketplaces.'¹¹⁶

Given that Communists sought to use this problem as a way of attacking the American political system, mainstream British opinion and coverage was often eager to support the US narrative of the subject which emphasised gradual amelioration. The fact African-Americans such as Paul Robeson, Bayard Rustin and Claudia Jones had contacts with the British far left ensured that racial injustices in America were predominantly publicised by communists. At the beginning of the 1950s, reflections on the subject tended to stress the 'hope' and 'progress' made in the US whilst trade unions pointed to the open-mindedness of their American counterparts.¹¹⁷ The Communist involvement deterred participation from the soft left and despite its doubts about the Martinsville case the *Manchester Guardian* editorialised that '[w]hen the "Daily Worker" and its friends take up a cause others become suspicious.'¹¹⁸ Sensitivity about the communist propaganda on the subject ensured that the British press coverage was cursory. Racial riots in Cicero, Chicago in 1951

¹¹⁵ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 47-60.

¹¹⁶ Harold Laski, *The American Democracy*, 494.

¹¹⁷ Rita Hinden, 'Hope in the Negro South', *Socialist Commentary*, September 1950, 210-3; Irving Howe and B. J. Widnik, 'Auto-Workers Fight Prejudice', *Socialist Commentary*, May 1950, 115-7; Woodrow Wyatt, 'The Negro is Making Progress in the Deep South', *Forward*, 2 May 1953, 4; Richard Strout, 'Time and the Negro', *Spectator*, 1 June 1951, 710-11; Evelyn Wrench, 'The American Negro', *Spectator*, 14 March 1952, 320.

¹¹⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 2 February 1951, 6; See also 'Comment', *Observer*, 18 March 1951, 4.

were barely reported in the British press and subsequent moments of tension did not discourage the perception that progress was being achieved. This narrative was epitomised after the US Supreme Court ruled in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that racial segregation was unconstitutional. Although politicians from southern states condemned the ruling and vowed to block efforts to integrate black schoolchildren, the left-wing *Daily Herald* compared *Brown* with the Beveridge Plan and *Tribune* concluded that ‘the old society of the South which strove to maintain racial discrimination is finally doomed.’¹¹⁹ As well as demonstrating the British uncertainties about the constitutional role of the Supreme Court — which had no power to enforce its decision and was soon ignored by Southern governments — it demonstrated that the British coverage often exaggerated progress. The optimism proved to be misplaced; in the states of the former Confederacy a decade after *Brown* only 2 percent of black students attended school with whites.¹²⁰ With the subtext being that the US could confront its past injustices and inadequacies unlike the USSR, there were similarities between this message and the propaganda of Washington, which was often re-published verbatim in trade union journals.¹²¹ Indeed, some of the British reactions to the Supreme Court decision sufficiently complemented the official American position that the USIA utilised them in its subsequent pamphlets. In one entry published alongside *The Negro in American Life*, future Labour Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart asserted that *Brown* was evidence that the US was showing ‘as she demonstrated in the days of Lincoln, that the democratic principle can triumph over injustice.’¹²²

This interpretation of American affairs was challenged in later years because *Brown* was followed by racial tension and the growth of the Civil Rights

¹¹⁹ ‘A Great Victory’, *Daily Herald*, 19 May 1954, 4; ‘Negro Boy Makes History’, *Tribune*, 21 May 1954, 1. Similarly celebratory conclusions were drawn in Don Iddon, ‘Nine Judges Light a Freedom Lamp’, *Daily Mail*, 19 May 1954, 4; H. S. Deighton, ‘The U.S. Supreme Court and Racial Segregation’, T112 RSL, WAC.

¹²⁰ Peter Irons, *Jim Crow’s Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision* (London: Penguin, 2004 [2002]), 190.

¹²¹ ‘The American Negro’, *Man and Metal*, April 1952, 64-5; ‘Around the World’, *The Garment Worker*, January 1953, 18.

¹²² Michael Stewart, ‘Equality Will Win’, *The American Negro To-Day: Facts and Views of American and British Writers* (London: USIS, [n. d.]), 37. Stewart also discussed the progress on the subject in his memoirs see Michael Stewart, *Life and Labour: An Autobiography* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980), 94.

Movement in response to Southern reluctance to integrate schools. By the mid-1950s, the violence could no longer be ignored by the British press and various journalists became less optimistic after *causes-celebres* such as Emmett Till, Autherine Lucy and the Little Rock Nine generated headlines overseas. As the Civil Rights movement gathered momentum and racial tensions became more overt, press reports remained confident that this was a sign of progress. During September 1957, when the integration of nine African-American students at Little Rock Central High School was blocked by a white mob, the press reports in Britain tended to stress that the ensuing violence and strife demonstrated improvements. The white segregationists were regarded as holding attitudes that would soon be extinct and the *News Chronicle* journalist Bruce Rothwell was typical in describing the white protestors as ‘only a thousand strong, men crazed with hate and women wild-eyed and hysterical’ and ultimately the ‘mob was not Little Rock, just as surely as it was not America.’¹²³ The location of the British American correspondents amongst the US elite on the East Coast often discouraged more thorough analysis of the problem and the challenging of this complacency. In 1962, *Guardian* editor Alastair Hetherington was frustrated when his American correspondents failed to visit the Deep South to report on racial tensions at the University of Alabama. Referring to its main US correspondent, he expressed annoyance that ‘we were getting the “New York Times” beautifully re-written by Alistair Cooke’ which ‘wasn’t enough’.¹²⁴

Even when journalists did venture outside of their natural territory and visited the Deep South, they were often able to reconcile experiences of segregation and racism with the notion that the US was a liberal democracy. When he travelled through the US in 1956, Cooke was optimistic about the recent progress. Of the high-profile case of Autherine Lucy, a school-girl expelled from Alabama University after her enrolment caused race riots, Cooke described it as ‘tragic freak’ and, with a characteristic reference to the Soviet

¹²³ Bruce Rothwell, ‘The City is Frightened, Ashamed’, *News Chronicle*, 26 September 1957, 4. See also ‘Little Rock’, *Manchester Guardian*, 6 September 1957, 8; ‘Lessons of Little Rock’, *Daily Telegraph*, 28 September 1957, 4; Michael Foot, ‘Little Rock — the end of the Myth?’ *Daily Herald*, 27 September 1957, 4.

¹²⁴ Note of a meeting between Alastair Hetherington and Alistair Cooke at Chester, 12 October 1962, C1/C12/7/1, MGP.

Union, described this as ‘the one lawless eruption so far’ and ‘all the more precious to the Communists for its rarity.’¹²⁵ Underpinning this response was his discomfort about the emancipation of African-Americans. In an edition of *Letter from America* after his trip, he warned:

Before we judge the South too hastily, we must put ourselves in their place. Suppose that half the population of Birmingham [...] or Sheffield, or Brighton or London was coloured. And suppose it had been for two or three hundred years. With the coloured people going to their schools and you going to yours. Would you at once accede to a law going through Parliament that next autumn your children must go to school with coloured people?¹²⁶

Though *Guardian* editor A. P. Wadsworth once praised Cooke’s ‘sensible views’ on the subject, his successor as editor Hetherington was less convinced, remarking later that Cooke ‘had a slight blind spot about civil rights in the South.’¹²⁷

Cooke was not the only journalist who could be accused of myopia on the subject even during the battles over de-segregation in the late 1950s. The BBC’s radio talks usually adopted a similar tone and historian John Lyons has claimed that although ‘there may have been some sympathy for the plight of African Americans, Britons still held rather negative views of them.’¹²⁸ Various prominent visitors to the American South drew optimistic conclusions in spite of having witnessed violence or a lack of integration. *The Times* editor William Haley travelled to Georgia and New Orleans in 1956 and in his diary recorded his experiences of travelling by segregated buses and taxis, and noted that there ‘must be progressions but we have not met them.’¹²⁹ Nonetheless, Haley’s published account of the tour stressed to readers that the South was undergoing profound change and such practices were ‘bound to crumble in the end.’¹³⁰ For

¹²⁵ Alistair Cooke, ‘Virginia Seeks to Make Haste Slowly’, *Manchester Guardian*, 11 February 1956, 7.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Nick Clarke, *Alistair Cooke: The Biography* (London: Orion, 2000 [1999]), 369.

¹²⁷ A. P. Wadsworth to Alistair Cooke, 26 March 1956, B/C202/760, MGP; Alastair Hetherington, *Guardian Years* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1981), 369.

¹²⁸ John F. Lyons, *America in the British Imagination*, 59.

¹²⁹ William Haley, US Tour Diary, 14 September 1956, HALY 15/6, CCC.

¹³⁰ ‘Notes on a Journey: Eisenhower’s America’, *The Times*, 14 November 1956, 11.

Guardian journalist James (later Jan) Morris, there was a similar conflict between her experiences and the reputation of American democracy when she toured the country. In Chicago, she reported hearing of attempts by white mobs to remove a black family from a previously all-white apartment block as well as noting racial economic disparities in New Jersey and the racial ghettoisation of Washington.¹³¹ Nonetheless, travelling through the American capitol Morris, later a sympathetic biographer of Abraham Lincoln, was captivated by the city and wrote that if one city in the world really does hold out a promise of ultimate decency, of fraternity among all peoples, it is still this dull old entity on the Potomac.’¹³² Ultimately, she urged readers to share her affection for political aspects of the country:

And if, one summer night, you stroll alone through the city after a mellowing dinner, and see its famous monuments all about, the great floodlit dome of the Capitol, the gleaming obelisk of Washington’s memorial, the White House demure and domestic behind its railings, craggy old Lincoln dim-lit in his marble chair—if ever you wander through the capital in such a mood, Jefferson in your head and Chesapeake prawns in your belly, then I defy you to resist the magic of the American experiment, or evade its ever-noble pathos.¹³³

The fact that the racial situation in the US was a persistent cause of British interest prompted some allegations that it received disproportionate attention which reflected the British sense of superiority over its ally on the subject. In an unaired section of his 1957 Reith Lecture, American diplomat George Kennan noted the American bewilderment at the ‘smug superiority of the European who finds it easy to be tolerant towards the coloured minority he doesn’t have.’¹³⁴ Indeed, there was often a tendency to regard American examples as lessons which should not be imported to Britain. With immigration increasing from the Commonwealth throughout the 1950s, race relations in Britain were also strained by the end of the decade with riots occurring in Notting Hill and

¹³¹ James Morris, *Coast to Coast* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962 [1956]), 29, 94 and 208

¹³² *Ibid*, 94-5.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 95.

¹³⁴ George Kennan, ‘The Trouble between Britain and America’, *John Bull*, 18 January 1958, 15.

Nottingham in 1958. The UK's racial situation was far from harmonious and the white majority was intolerant towards the immigrant communities. According to Peter Fryer, Britons tended to regard the black population 'as heathens who practised head-hunting cannibalism, infanticide, polygamy and 'black magic.'¹³⁵ Nonetheless, outbreaks of tension or violence were reported with references to the American situation. Little Rock and Arkansas's Governor Orval Faubus were cited as examples to be avoided in Britain. The front-page of the *Daily Herald* urged 'Don't Bring Little Rock to Britain' and members of the public demonstrating after the riots displayed placards also alluding to events in Arkansas.¹³⁶ However, it was the growing racial tension in the UK that encouraged the left in particular to become more active in campaigning against racial injustice in the US. A month after the riots in Britain, African-American labourer Jimmy Wilson was scheduled to be executed for theft amounting to \$1.95, a decision which was eventually overturned after an international campaign and protests from Labour's General Secretary Morgan Phillips.¹³⁷ Silent about past US injustices, Labour's concern about Wilson was partly motivated by its closer scrutiny of racism and prejudice in Britain following Notting Hill. Its National Executive Committee began work on a statement about racial discrimination in late 1958 and the party published a pamphlet on the subject in 1960 as it was now more sensitive to evidence of intolerance.¹³⁸ Though the far left continued to promote the issue, it was thus by the end of the period an issue that attracted wider debate and interest.

Given the focus on the US from the British media, it is unsurprising that American race relations attracted the sustained attention of audiences across the Atlantic. Despite the differences between the two countries' racial situation, this was another issue on which Britons looked to the US for policy inspiration and tended to regard the problems as analogous. Visiting African-American slum housing in 1947, Conservative MP Julian Amery observed that 'In parts they

¹³⁵ Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto, 2010 [1984]), 375.

¹³⁶ 'Crush it!' *Daily Herald*, 1 September 1958, 1.

¹³⁷ 'Unrebuked', *News Chronicle*, 6 September 1958, 4; 'Death Sentence', *News Chronicle*, 23 September 1958, 4.

¹³⁸ LP/GS/RAC/48-51 for the statements, drafts and papers about the party's working party on racial discrimination and their interest in Jimmy Wilson.

are as bad as the East End.’¹³⁹ After Notting Hill, opponents and proponents of the possible introduction of racial relations legislation cited the American case as instructive even though civil rights legislation was several years away. Labour MP Frank Tomney urged the government ‘to look at that American legislation, because in my opinion the American negro, except in the South, has reached the greatest stage of emancipation of those in any country.’¹⁴⁰ By contrast, opponents of legislation tended to note that progress was being achieved even before the Supreme Court intervened in the issue.¹⁴¹ Thus, even with regard to an issue which elicited significant criticism of US practices there was a belief that American experiences and lessons could be applicable in Britain.

Conclusions

The belief that their political system shared important values, traditions or beliefs with the United States was widely expressed by British commentators with contrasting ideological backgrounds. Churchillian rhetoric about the English-speaking peoples was merely the most well-known example of the frequent efforts to look across the Atlantic for evidence to justify programmes and policies. Far from being based on anti-American hostility, implicit in the coverage was the notion that ideas and practices were to some degree transferable or that important lessons could be learned about the advantages of particular innovations. Attitudes were thus shaped by domestic positions and debates; the fact that American developments held relevant or portentous lessons for Britain’s future was the result of the US’s symbolic association with most forms of modernity. The post-war evolution of the journalistic analysis of the subject is demonstrative of this tendency to perceive Anglo-American similarities as observers often overlooked or minimised the country’s illiberal

¹³⁹ Julian Amery, *Diary of 1947 Visit to the USA*, 18 January 1947.

¹⁴⁰ Frank Tomney, HC Deb, *Hansard*, 5 December 1958, Volume 596 Column 1596.

¹⁴¹ Lord Winter, House of Lords Debate, *Hansard*, 19 November 1958, Volume 212, Column 663-4. This argument was apparent in the right-wing press even before Notting Hill. During the Little Rock crisis, the *Daily Telegraph* claimed that ‘the lot of the Southern Negro was improving steadily, and even rapidly, before the Supreme Court made its dramatic intervention. ‘Peril at Little Rock’, *Daily Telegraph*, 9 September 1957, 8.

or reactionary features. However, fundamental to this cautiousness about scrutinising the attacks on civil liberties was the international bipolarity of the Cold War. With the Kremlin arguing that these incidents undermined the US's claims to represent democracy and liberalism, many British observers were unwilling to protest for fear of damaging Western propaganda or harming the Anglo-American relationship. Chapter Two examines in greater detail the effects of the global political situation on British attitudes and assesses the diverse responses to US foreign policy. Investigating views about American objectives, it questions the reasons for contrasting reactions to Washington's international programme, the extent to which these views intersected with other views and beliefs and the degree to which the criticism of American Cold War strategy can be characterised as 'anti-American.'

Chapter Two

Between Washington and Moscow

Surveying the state of British attitudes towards the United States and the Soviet Union in 1947, Tom Harrisson argued that ‘the way that thinking people would describe our situation today, in psychological terms, is that we are in between USA and USSR, not just geographically, politically, or in power terms, but also, much more importantly, in social and sociological terms.’¹ Linked with this position in world politics was what Harrisson, the co-founder of social research organisation Mass Observation (M-O), identified as an ‘alarming increase in anti-American sentiment’ with the ‘qualitative violence’ of the phenomenon now ‘widely overheard in private conversation.’ Despite the post-war growth in East-West tension and the concomitant development of the Anglo-American relationship, Harrisson reported that M-O’s research ‘showed rather fewer people openly favourable to the USA than to Russia.’² These conclusions were indicative of several assumptions which continued to be apparent in discussions of British attitudes towards the US throughout the long 1950s. As well as being amongst the first accounts warning about the growth of anti-Americanism in the UK, Harrisson’s comments illustrated the extent to which the onset of the Cold War encouraged attempts to gauge British views of both superpowers. Within the bipolar international system — which led to the construction of opposing military alliances and outbreak of proxy wars — Britain was amongst America’s closest allies. Shared international aims led to the growth of close defence and intelligence links which were augmented by transatlantic networks of political and diplomatic contacts. Despite the centrality of this Atlanticism to British foreign policy, this did not prevent outspoken criticism, hostility and opposition towards American international policy or particular aspects of the ‘special relationship.’ Assessing the period between the Korean War and the Cuban Missile Crisis, this chapter examines British attitudes towards American Cold War foreign policy. It investigates the

¹ Tom Harrisson, ‘British Opinion Moves Towards a New Synthesis’, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 11, 3 (1947), 341.

² *Ibid*, 332.

growth in the usage of the term 'anti-Americanism' and questions if the widespread anxieties were justified about this aspect of the Anglo-American relationship. It analyses the reasons for the differing reactions towards the alliances and the ways in which they intersected with other political values and circumstances. Although there were periodic concerns about Washington's international policy, this chapter suggests that the extent of anti-Americanism was exaggerated and simplified the reasons for the opposition to US foreign policy. Not only did the USSR attract greater suspicion and hostility than its Cold War rival but attitudes towards America's world aims were complicated, the product of various beliefs which often pre-dated the close diplomatic relationship. Moreover, the intensity and frequency of the British objections to US objectives is best categorised as criticism rather than pathological anti-Americanism.

Who is anti-American?

During the long 1950s, the Cold War was the defining feature of international politics. Optimism that the wartime allies would co-operate after 1945 soon diminished amidst mutual suspicions and tensions. Although relations between London and Washington were at times strained in the years after the Second World War, East-West animosity influenced the growth of the close Anglo-American relationship during the late 1940s. Ostensible evidence of aggression by the Kremlin in Czechoslovakia and Berlin encouraged the conclusion that communist regimes were inherently expansionist. In response to this apparent threat, the Labour Government and Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin cultivated close ties with Washington and as a result NATO was founded in 1949. According to Andrew Gamble, the bipartisanship about the subject meant that the alliance was 'the real linchpin of the post-war consensus' and a policy which 'though occasionally questioned never looked remotely like being overthrown or seriously challenged.'³ However, not all sections of British opinion were supportive of such policies. Particularly in left-wing circles, this

³ Andrew Gamble, *Britain in Decline: Economic Policy, Political Strategy and the British State* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994 [1981]), 105.

Atlanticism was a frequent source of frustration for politicians and activists who objected to the alliance. In the late 1940s, the Labour left challenged Bevin's foreign policy which centred on the Anglo-American alliance; a group of backbench MPs urging the government to pursue an international programme independent of both superpowers. This marked the beginning of dissent on the left which continued intermittently for the remainder of the period. Different views of the subject were important to Labour's frequent factionalism; Aneurin Bevan and his supporters' criticisms of the alliance often set them against the party's Atlanticist leadership.

It was within the context of Cold War alliances and the hardening East-West tensions that 'anti-Americanism' became a popular term for describing views about the US. As Philippe Roger has noted of twentieth century France, the concept's 'entry into the French lexicon seems to have been a direct consequence of the cold war.'⁴ The same was true of Britain; the rigid binaries of the era ultimately made it difficult to voice criticism of the US or prejudices about Americans without it being interpreted as anti-Americanism. Though the term was rarely used before 1945 in relation to Britain, it became embedded in the political discourse on both sides of the Atlantic during the 1950s. However, commentators were at first reluctant to employ the term and there was at first defensiveness in response to claims about the growth of anti-Americanism. When protests about the 'special relationship' were articulated by a group of Labour MPs in the late 1940s, the critics were more frequently attacked for their disloyalty or crypto-communism and Bevin described the 'stab in the back' he received from his colleagues who opposed his policies. Before 1950, allegations about the pervasiveness of the attitude tended to be met with suspicion. After Tom Harrisson reported the extent of the growth in anti-Americanism and *Newsweek* journalist Fred Vanderschmidt argued in 1947 that one third of Britons were anti-American, their conclusions were challenged in the press. The *Daily Mail* — whose US correspondent Don Iddon was regarded by Vanderschmidt as amongst the worst offenders — claimed that only the 'dupes of Communist propaganda' deserved the label and asked 'What does it

⁴ Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy: A Story of French Anti-Americanism*, trans. Sharon Bowman (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), xiv.

matter if a few British are “anti-American” or a few American “anti-British” so long as both are sincerely “pro-Freedom?”⁵ Iddon regarded the accusations as ‘hard to understand’ whilst a journalist for the *Yorkshire Post* questioned the utility of the term, suggesting that ‘[m]ost of us warmly admire the Americans’ but ‘we are, above everything, pro-British just as the Americans are, above everything, pro-American.’⁶

As Cold War tensions ossified, objections to the alliance were more likely to be interpreted as examples of anti-Americanism. The initial scepticism about the relevance of the concept did not last long; by 1952 the *Yorkshire Post* reported of the growing factionalism on the left that those ‘who give way to anti-American prejudice are giving help and encouragement to the enemies of Britain.’⁷ Given that it offered the most outspoken critique of the Anglo-American relationship, it was the left-wing of the Labour Party which was most often labelled ‘anti-American.’ As the politician who offered leadership to the critics of the relationship, Bevan and his supporters were often forced to defend themselves against such charges. In 1953, the *Daily Mirror* published an article by a New York newspaper which claimed that British anti-Americanism was widespread and that Bevan ‘needs hate for his politics [and] finds it more profitable and more in line with his Social Democratic ideas to turn it on the United States than the Soviet Union.’⁸ Although the *Mirror*’s correspondent “Cassandra” dismissed the allegations by stressing the British gratitude towards its wartime ally, 27 percent of respondents to a BIPO survey in 1955 described Bevan as ‘too anti-American.’⁹ As the term was popularised, it tended to be Atlanticists who defined the terms of the debate, utilising the concept as a way of discrediting their opponents’ ideas about foreign policy. Conservative MPs referred to Bevan’s colleague and ally on the Labour left when they called for

⁵ ‘A Word to the Top Dog’, *Daily Mail*, 9 January 1948, 1.

⁶ ‘Don Iddon’s Diary’, *Daily Mail*, 26 May 1948, 2; W. L. A. ‘Can we be said to be anti-American?’ *Yorkshire Post*, 20 August 1948, 2.

⁷ ‘A petty Socialist move’, *Yorkshire Post*, 6 February 1952, 2.

⁸ ‘The Accusation’, *Daily Mirror*, 29 July 1953, 6.

⁹ “Cassandra”, ‘Is Britain Really anti-American?’ *Daily Mirror*, 29 July 1953, 7; BIPO Survey 436, 1955 Election Release, CCO 180/21/1/1, CPA. However, a similar percentage (26%) regarded it as a virtue that Bevan would stand up to the Americans. In an April 1954 poll, 27 per cent made the same assertion about Bevan but in 1952 the proportion regarding him as ‘too anti-American’ was only 12 per cent. See BIPO Survey 405A, CCO 180/21/1/1, CPA.

‘organised action in the House to counter anti-American efforts of the Barbara Castles, particularly at Question Time.’¹⁰ In Labour’s internecine conflicts over foreign policy, ‘anti-American’ was a term used alongside other insults which derided the left-wing of the party as ‘fellow travellers,’ ‘crypto-communists,’ or ‘idealists.’ Prominent Atlanticist Denis Healey described his rivals as ‘political Peter Pans’ and remarked that ‘there is a real danger of anti-Americanism’ which he believed was ‘a disgrace to socialism and a menace to peace.’¹¹ Attempting to discredit the critics of the ‘special relationship,’ Atlanticists portrayed ‘anti-Americanism’ as stemming from Britain’s declining world position *vis-à-vis* the US. Labour MP Anthony Crosland described it as an ‘almost universal left-wing neurosis’ which Hugh Gaitskell believed was ‘fairly widespread and derived from envy at American wealth and power combined with the fear that Washington could embroil Britain in a world war.’¹²

Allegations about the growth of anti-Americanism were part of broader fears about the deterioration of the Anglo-American relationship amidst periodic intergovernmental disagreements. With titles such as ‘Are Britain and the United States Drifting Apart?’ and ‘Does the World Misjudge America?’ BBC radio programming on the topic reflected the common perception that the ‘special relationship’ was imperilled. The warnings about anti-Americanism intersected with various other anxieties about the state of the relationship. American visitors often complained about their experiences of prejudice in the UK with an article in conservative journal *John Bull* capturing the mood of these publications by asking ‘Why are we American Visitors so Disliked?’¹³ Anxious to minimise negativity towards America, the BBC’s coverage of American affairs often concentrated on attempts to reverse or remedy negative

¹⁰ Minutes of the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee, 6 May 1953, CRD 2/34/1, CPA.

¹¹ *LPACR* 1952, 123-4.

¹² Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, 195; Hugh Gaitskell, ‘Anti-Americanism in Britain’, in Philip Williams (ed), *The Diaries of Hugh Gaitskell 1945-1956* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), 316-20. Similar ideas were articulated in P. J. Pitman, ‘Is Anti-Americanism Justified?’ *The Post*, 8 November 1952, 489-90.

¹³ Elizabeth Randall, ‘Why are we American Visitors so Disliked?’ *John Bull*, 28 January 1950, 7-8. See also Bill Short, ‘Americans are Human’, *Labour Woman*, May 1952, 333-4; Mary McCarthy, ‘Thoughts of an American in England’, *Listener*, 17 June 1954, 1041; Cyril O. Houle, ‘Anti-Americanism in Britain’, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 September 1951, 4.

attitudes about the US.¹⁴ Speaking on the BBC in 1950, writer John Usborne told listeners how he had abandoned former prejudices about the US and advised his fellow countrymen ‘How to Like Americans.’ Although he claimed to have once regarded Americans as materialistic, bad mannered and uncultured, Usborne now concluded that he ‘had stopped somehow, thinking of Americans as Americans, as people who are different from us.’¹⁵ This anxiety and the ensuing attempts to diminish anti-American sentiment were noted by writer V. S. Pritchett on a US visit in 1954. Recalling a conference by the Committee for Scientific and Cultural Freedom on the subject, he complained that:

By transferring unhappy things to the problem shelf, the conference, the symposium and — in personal life — to the psychiatrist’s couch, one has denied the buck, denied personal responsibility, and preserved oneself from the discomforts of facing awkward facts. The question “Why do Europeans dislike us?” for example, had become subtly transformed, when I was in New York, into something more soothing to self-esteem; the “problem” of anti-Americanism in Europe.¹⁶

Even though the term ‘anti-Americanism’ simplified the reasons for opposition towards US foreign policy or the Anglo-American relationship, critics of Atlanticism struggled to mount a convincing defence to these charges which were reified through frequent expression. Bevan’s 1952 book *In Place of Fear* began with the complaint that ‘it is almost impossible to express critical views about the policy of a nation to which you do not belong, without exposing yourself to the charge of being anti that nation.’ Despite not mentioning the US, his comments were a reaction against his reputation as anti-American and he warned that such language ‘transfers to the nation concerned,

¹⁴ In March 1952, the BBC received a note from the Central Office of Information to the Foreign Office which warned about the possibility of growing disagreements before that year’s Presidential Election. It reported that ‘speakers are likely to say a good deal that will help the Communists to make anti-American propaganda’ and advised that the government’s information services publicise Britain’s close relations with the USA and ‘by word of mouth all American statements showing the United States Government’s peaceful intention.’ Note from Maurice V. Miller to E. C. R. Hadfield, 11 March 1952, E2/19/2, WAC.

¹⁵ John Usborne, ‘How to Like Americans’, BBC Home Service, T620, RSL, WAC.

¹⁶ V. S. Pritchett, ‘Problem Addicts’, 20 March 1954, 350-1.

emotional connotations that belong to the world of personal relations.’¹⁷ It was not only Labour MPs who were forced to defend their criticism of American foreign policy or US politics and culture against charges of anti-Americanism. Novelist and playwright J. B. Priestley, defending his criticism of US foreign policy and commercialised culture, claimed that he had ‘more friends in America than [...] in any country except for England.’ In 1954, he wrote in the *New Statesman*, a journal which was also forced to defend itself against charges of anti-Americanism, that his views about the US were more complicated and that his criticisms were the result of disappointment at America’s recent trajectory. He argued that the US was ‘a nation that came out of a noble dream’ and ‘[i]f it is anti-American to remember that dream, which so many people seem to forget, then I am indeed anti-American.’¹⁸

Priestley’s comments demonstrated the subjectivity of the term which was so widely employed in post-war Britain but his difficulty in providing a convincing defence of his views were indicative of the fact that it was easier for Atlanticists to level charges of anti-Americanism than to engage with the critics’ arguments. By the middle of the decade, it was rare that criticism of the US was voiced without accompanying discussion of the pervasiveness of the phenomenon. Even individuals who were renowned for their ‘anti-American’ views levelled the insult as their rivals. Philosopher Bertrand Russell’s criticism of American politics and foreign policy meant that he continues to be regarded as one of the chief exponents of the ‘most extreme, bizarre, and irrational type’ of anti-Americanism.¹⁹ After Russell intervened during the Cuban Missile Crisis to call for a summit between the US and USSR, “Cassandra” was less tolerant than he had been of Bevan’s views almost a decade earlier as the *Daily Mirror* journalist describing Russell as ‘blatantly anti-American and servilely pro-Communist.’²⁰ However, even Russell warned of the growth in the

¹⁷ Aneurin Bevan, *In Place of Fear* (London: Heinemann, 1952), 120. His wife and fellow left-wing Labour MP Jennie Lee argued that he was anti-American. But he was, if you like, pro-British. He had faith in the qualities of his own people if only they were given sane and courageous leadership measuring up to the needs of the time.’ Jennie Lee, *My Life with Nye* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), 181.

¹⁸ J. B. Priestley, ‘Who is anti-American?’ *New Statesman*, 5 November 1955, 567.

¹⁹ Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Critiques at Home and Abroad*, 375.

²⁰ ‘Cassandra’, ‘Drawing The Line’, *Daily Mirror*, 29 October 1962, 6.

phenomenon, claiming in the *New York Times* in 1957 that ‘a great many people in Britain have hostile emotion toward the [US] is an undeniable fact, and a very unfortunate one, since political cooperation is of the utmost importance.’ Anti-American sentiment, which for Russell was the result of British cultural contempt, envy and McCarthyism, was ‘unwise, illiberal and unjust.’²¹ Few elite figures used ‘anti-American’ or ‘pro-American’ to describe their views of international affairs but it was something recorded in interviews with the British public. Interviewed by M-O, a 73 year-old retired male was not alone in making this claim as he said that ‘my whole attitude can be summed up in one word – anti-American’ which he explained was because ‘America is the menace to world peace.’²² Even when individuals identified with the term, though, their descriptions demonstrated its complexity as respondents often distinguished between American politicians, the American population, and the individual American they had met. Another participant in M-O’s research, a 52 year old female writer, noted ‘Individual Americans either very nice or else the kind who come over thinking they own everything who are bloody. American policy, hell for us, so I feel in general anti-American, tempered by thoughts of the nice Americans one knows.’²³

Though readily invoked, the term was often utilised without consideration of its definition or limits, something which allowed the blurring of the distinction between reasonable criticism of US policies and irrational or pathological prejudice. When a BBC radio programme examined the topic in 1962, the panellists’ agreed definition — that anti-Americanism was ‘criticism of an unjust kind [...] based on ignorance, on prejudice, on resentment, on malice’ — did little to clarify the matter.²⁴ Whether an objection was reasonable or justified was moot and it was usually Atlanticists who acted as the arbiters in such matters. Including Tony Crosland, conservative writers Constantine Fitzgibbon and Peregrine Worsthorne, novelist Kingsley Amis and academics D. W. Brogan, Geoffrey Gorer, and Marcus Cunliffe, the BBC’s panel attracted

²¹ Bertrand Russell, ‘Three Reasons Why They Dislike Us’, *New York Times*, 8 September 1957, 20 and 115.

²² DR 4587, reply to January-February 1951 Directive, MOA.

²³ DR 26, reply to August 1950 Directive, MOA.

²⁴ ‘Anti-American Attitudes: A Symposium’, *Listener*, 19 April 1962, 668-9.

complaints for being comprised of figures who were broadly supportive of the Anglo-American alliance and enthusiastic about US culture.²⁵ Fitzgibbon, who acted as the programme's chair, instructed participants before the recording that the conclusion could be that 'anti-Americanism is a manifestation of stupidity-cum-envy, similar to anti-Semitism, and that most intelligent people in (Britain) are as immune to it as to the other, racial rubbish.'²⁶ Although few would have regarded these individuals as anti-American, they too were prone to expressing unfavourable views about the US. In 1951, Brogan reported of American television after a trip across the Atlantic that 'I was often nauseated by some horrid little children with ugly voices aping grown-ups.'²⁷ Other panellists were similarly willing to criticise the US later in their careers. By the late 1960s, Amis also bemoaned the seeming Americanisation of British culture as he noted that it meant that any differences 'get ironed out ... as Kent becomes more and more like California.'²⁸

Some commentators and politicians were less convinced about the extent of anti-Americanism in Britain or questioned the usefulness of the term. Speaking in 1952, Prime Minister Winston Churchill explained that the attitude was confined to 'one eighth at the outside' of the House of Commons and Fitzgibbon challenged the use of a simple dichotomy for describing British views of the US:

In the first place, the bulk of the population is neither pro- nor anti-American. [...] A vague dislike of all foreigners may crystallize into a vague annoyance with the airmen from the nearby US base (or, more usually, with their English teen-age girlfriends). This is not a political emotion. [...] For the vast majority, which is predominantly working-class, seldom think about America at all.²⁹

²⁵ A letter to the *Listener* complained about the 'pro-American' bias of the panel. Tom Earley, Letter to the *Listener*, 26 April 1962, 735-6. Worsthorne had sought to identify the reasons for anti-Americanism as early as 1954. See Peregrine Worsthorne, 'America – Conscience or Shield?' *Encounter*, November 1954, 15-22.

²⁶ Marcus Cunliffe, 'The Anatomy of Anti-Americanism', 21.

²⁷ D. W. Brogan, 'Television Over There', *Spectator*, 26 January 1951, 103-4.

²⁸ Quoted in H. L. Malchow, *Special Relations: The Americanization of Britain?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 15.

²⁹ Constantine Fitzgibbon, 'Anti-American Zoo', *Encounter*, July 1959, 9.

Compared with the journalists and politicians who were eager to portray their rivals as anti-American, the academic accounts of the subject which proliferated in the 1950s used the term sparingly.³⁰ Milton Graham, a researcher whose work was funded by UNESCO, was even dismissive about the usefulness of the term, questioning if its popularity had been exaggerated. Noting that there was no ‘hard core’ group which was anti-American at all times, Graham argued in 1952 that ‘it probably matters very little whether a Briton given to expressing “critical views” about America can be labelled “anti-American.”’³¹ Given that it came to be used as a term of abuse and was so extensively debated, this distinction is more important than Graham believed but the conflation of criticism of the US and prejudiced hostility was increasingly common. The anxiety about anti-Americanism or damage to the ‘special relationship’ meant that even individuals offering valid criticisms or questions about US foreign policy were accused of being motivated by prejudice. In 1954, MPs on the left-wing of the Labour Party were said to be driven by anti-Americanism when they called for a UN investigation into Washington’s possible role in a recent coup in Guatemala. Their Conservative opponents dismissed these complaints, with one backbench MP describing the questions as ‘vicious anti-American propaganda.’³² Given that the State Department was decades later revealed to have instigated the revolution, the left-wing concerns were prescient but the fact that they were denounced for this stance demonstrates the sensitivity about British criticism of US foreign policy.³³ Anti-Americanism was thus a label with which few politicians or commentators wanted to be associated and was more a term of abuse than a clearly defined concept.

³⁰ See Leon Epstein, *Britain – Uneasy Ally*; Henry Pelling, *America and the British Left*; Henry L. Roberts and Paul A. Wilson, *Britain and the United States*.

³¹ Milton D. Graham, ‘Anti-Americanism: British Garden Variety’, 218 and 224.

³² Colonel Gomme-Duncan, HC Deb, *Hansard*, 12 July 1954, Volume 530, Columns 26-31. See also Captain Duncan, HC Deb, *Hansard*, 5 July 1954, Volume 529, Columns 1767-8; ‘Is this the way to bring peace?’ *Daily Express*, 22 June 1954, 4; ‘Whizz-Bang War’, *Daily Mail*, 2 July 1954, 1.

³³ Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 2005).

Anti-Communism

Besides the ambiguities which existed with the definition and usage of the term 'anti-Americanism,' the growth in its usage occurred at a time during which it was generally accepted that the USSR was the major threat to Britain. The Soviet Union and its allies were regarded as inherently aggressive and, though the US eventually led the Western bloc in the Cold War and pursued the more robust anti-communist agenda, it was British elites who initially showed greater suspicion of Moscow's world aims in 1945-6. According to John Lewis Gaddis, the Foreign Office assessment of the Soviet threat after 1945 'was more sweeping in character and apocalyptic in tone than anything in the record of private or public assessments by major American officials at the time.'³⁴ Such views were not confined to Whitehall but were espoused more widely and identified as a major reason for the onset of the Cold War and concomitant growth of the 'special relationship.' The maintenance and development of the Anglo-American alliance was an objective pursued by the leaderships of both the Conservative and Labour parties. As the manifesto of the Conservative Party claimed in 1950 '[a]bove all we seek to work in fraternal association with the United States to help by all means all countries [...] to resist the aggression of Communism by open attack or secret penetration.'³⁵

On the left, anti-communism was the main justification for the Atlanticist policies pursued by the Clement Attlee Governments between 1945 and 1951. The creation of NATO — which was partly the legacy of Labour Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin — was portrayed as a purely defensive manoeuvre to deter the spread of communism. In 1951, Attlee referred to the USSR when he claimed that 'we have been forced by their attitude to build up a great non-aggressive treaty of defence, the Atlantic Treaty.' For the then Prime Minister, Russian aggression was responsible for the global instability and NATO 'was the result of the Cold War, it did not cause the Cold War.'³⁶ Encouraged by

³⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 46.

³⁵ '1950: This is the Road', in Iain Dale (ed), *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos, 1900-1997* (London: Politico's, 2000), 88.

³⁶ *LPACR 1951*, 87.

memories of the Second World War and Nazi aggression, this emphasis on USSR belligerence persisted amongst the party's leadership for the remainder of the decade and, as Hugh Gaitskell put it in 1954 the 'chief credit for the strength of the Anglo-American partnership goes to the Kremlin'.³⁷ Few objections to this argument were voiced in the left-wing journals which supported the Labour leadership. *Labour Woman* summarised the prevailing viewpoint when it noted in 1951 that the USSR was intent on imperialist expansion combined with sustained propaganda designed to divide the nations and to confuse public opinion in democratic countries.³⁸ With Britain beset by financial crises in the aftermath of the Second World War, it was unable to counter this perceived threat to Western Europe alone, something which led to calls for American intervention. In 1952, Labour discussion pamphlet *Problems of Foreign Policy* argued that many of the party's 'most important objectives in world affairs depend on America assuming, not fewer responsibilities than she already has, but more.'³⁹ Atlanticists were wary of a possible American return to its pre-war 'isolation,' arguing that Britain needed to remain close to the US in order to influence international affairs. In 1952, *Socialist Commentary* similarly justified its Atlanticism with reference to the effect that Britain could have on American foreign policy. According to the journal's editors, Britain occupied 'the same boat in a stormy sea with a wayward and dominant partner' which required Britons 'not to engage in an embittered slanging-match, to impute motives or to threaten to jump overboard, but to use every ounce of our intelligence and influence to guide the boat safely to shore.'⁴⁰

According to the burgeoning Atlanticists and foreign policy intellectuals within the Labour Party, this was a realistic or rational reading of international affairs. With sections of the left having long asserted that ideology should play a role in foreign policy-making, the Labour leadership sought to discourage such ideas with the claim that the deteriorating world situation called for a pragmatic approach. T. E. M McKitterick argued that 'principles are not always

³⁷ Hugh Gaitskell, 'The Search for Anglo-American Policy, *Foreign Affairs*, 32, 4 (1954), 574.

³⁸ 'Editor's Letter', *Labour Woman*, February 1951, 26.

³⁹ *Problems of Foreign Policy* (London: Labour Party, 1952), 6.

⁴⁰ 'Uncle Sam', *Socialist Commentary*, April 1952, 74.

accurate guides to action' and Christopher Mayhew argued that 'logic and common sense' needed to govern foreign policy.⁴¹ Although they portrayed this anti-communism as inevitable given the state of international affairs, it was questionable whether the Soviet Union was as expansionist as was often suggested. Denis Healey, who served as Labour's International Secretary before becoming an MP and close adviser to Hugh Gaitskell on foreign affairs, questioned the anti-communism which defined both parties' foreign policies. In his memoirs published at the end of the Cold War, Healey claimed that

Like most observers at the time, I believed that Stalin's behaviour showed that he was bent on the military conquest of Western Europe. I now think that we were all mistaken. We took too seriously some of the Leninist rhetoric pouring out from Moscow, as the Russians took too seriously some of the anti-communist rhetoric favoured by American politicians.⁴²

Healey was right to note that such attitudes were widely endorsed but failed to acknowledge that he was amongst the most prolific in advancing this viewpoint. He often characterised the USSR as belligerent and described an international conspiracy in which national communist parties were portrayed as being totally subservient to Moscow. He argued in 1948 that for communists 'the idea of a revolution carried on simultaneously in all countries had been replaced by the idea of a revolution growing with the territorial aggrandisement of the Soviet State.'⁴³ Whilst supporters of the Atlantic Alliance portrayed their anti-communism as a logical or commonsensical viewpoint, the warnings about the expansion of the ideology at times exaggerated the threat. Describing the radical government in British Guiana in 1954, Rita Hinden, an editor of Atlanticist journal *Socialist Commentary* and former head of Labour's Colonial Bureau, argued that the ideology was a 'cancer' which 'builds its success on the

⁴¹ T. E. M. McKitterick, *Conditions of British Foreign Policy* (London: Fabian Society, 1951), 4; Christopher Mayhew, 'British Foreign Policy since 1945', *International Affairs*, 26, 4 (1950), 477-86.

⁴² Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Penguin 1990 [1989]), 101.

⁴³ Denis Healey, 'The Cominform and World Communism', *International Affairs*, 24, 3, (1948), 341.

good-natured tolerance of democrats, and particularly of socialists, whom it then turns round and destroys.⁴⁴

Regardless of whether this anxiety about the Soviet Union was justified, though, it was widely invoked at times of international crisis and confrontation between the US and USSR. The British reactions to the outbreak of war in Korea in June 1950 demonstrated the wide support for this characterisation of Russian aims and the notion that it was responsible for the onset of the Cold War. For the British Government, the conflict in the Far East presented an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the Anglo-American relationship but the popularity of anti-communism in Britain ensured that its participation in the US-led United Nations intervention received broader endorsement. Events in the Far East only confirmed the orthodox interpretation that the West was merely defending itself against Soviet or communist aggression. For the then Leader of the Opposition, Winston Churchill, the response showed that the ‘fraternal association of the English-speaking race all over the world [...] may in the end be found to be effective by warding off from us the infinite horrors of a third world war.’⁴⁵ Amongst the Labour leadership, the Soviet Union was blamed for the conflict as Attlee was reported as having told the party’s National Executive Committee that ‘the point had now been reached when Soviet Russia and its satellites had to be shown clearly that the Social Democratic nations would oppose the policy they had initiated in many parts of the world.’⁴⁶ With both parties’ ancillary organisations endorsing the prevailing anti-communism, there were few signs of dissent amongst mainstream political groups. The trades unions retained the suspicion of the far left which derived from the domestic struggles with communist during the inter-war period. At the Federation of British Industries conference in 1951, its President, Robert Sinclair, commended the US action. He noted that calamity could only be averted if the countries of the West ‘make themselves collectively so strong in

⁴⁴ Rita Hinden, ‘The Case of British Guiana’, *Encounter*, 2, 1 (1954), 21.

⁴⁵ *Conservative Party Weekend Talking Points*, 1 July 1950, 1.

⁴⁶ See also Minutes of a Meeting of Labour’s National Executive Committee, 23 August 1950, Labour Party NEC Papers, LHASC.

the military sense that aggression by any who seek to undermine those principles is unattractive.⁴⁷

Criticism of US policy would become more prominent as the intervention continued but the press was initially supportive of the UN operation. The *Daily Mail* described the similarity of the motives of Britain and the US when it editorialised that ‘America is fighting to resist tyranny, as Britain has so often done and is doing again.’⁴⁸ After troops were sent to the Far East in July, the *News of the World* was confident that ‘a united and resolute Britain, in co-operation with her allies, can yet preserve the peace of the world.’⁴⁹ The left-wing and liberal press was also supportive though wary about the prospect that conflict could be extended throughout the region. The *News Chronicle* praised the American response as ‘prompt and bold’ whilst the *Daily Herald* warned that unless ‘action is taken to check this crime the Communists will be encouraged to use force again and again.’⁵⁰ More remarkable was the support for the intervention by former critics of the Anglo-American relationship. As Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin sought to cultivate a close alliance with the US after 1945, the strongest criticism emanated from the Labour Government’s backbenches. Founded in opposition to Bevin’s Atlanticism, the Keep Left Group argued that Britain should remain independent from both superpowers and work to establish a ‘third force’ in Western Europe. By 1950, however, Marshall Aid and signs of Soviet aggression had convinced many former critics that Britain could not opt out of the Cold War. Prominent critic Michael Foot portrayed the UN’s response as consistent with values of collective security which had long been apparent on the British left. He argued that the Americans were fighting ‘to uphold a principle which the Labour Party ever since 1918 has held to be essential for the preservation of world peace.’⁵¹ Richard Crossman, another former critic of British Atlanticism, concluded in 1951 that ‘the best

⁴⁷ ‘The road that lies before us: Sir Robert Sinclair’s Address at FBI Annual General Meeting’, *FBI Review*, May 1951, 7.

⁴⁸ ‘The War Widens’, *Daily Mail*, 29 June 1950, 1.

⁴⁹ ‘Mr. Attlee Must Tell the Nation’, *News of the World*, 30 July 1950, 4.

⁵⁰ ‘Time to Stop it’, *News Chronicle*, 28 June 1950, 2; ‘Korea’, *Daily Herald*, 28 June 1950, 2.

⁵¹ Michael Foot, ‘The True Meaning of Korea’, *Tribune*, 28 July 1950, 3-4. *Tribune*’s editorials were also supportive of the US’s attempts to resist Soviet expansionism. See ‘The War in Korea’, *Tribune*, 30 June 1950, 3-4.

hope of world peace lies in a constructive alliance between American welfare capitalism and British welfare socialism.’⁵²

Not all sections of British opinion were willing to endorse this interpretation of international politics or American foreign policy but the main dissentients were politically marginal. Several Labour MPs warned that Britain’s alliance with Washington made Britain vulnerable to attack but sustained challenges to the orthodox version of events were confined to the far left. The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and the *Daily Worker* attributed the Cold War tension to the US and any signs of American aggression were denounced to deflect comparable allegations about the USSR. Whereas most Britons interpreted the conflict as evidence of Russian belligerence, communist-led organisations accused Washington of embarking on an illegal invasion, intervening in a civil war, and massacring Korean civilians.⁵³ The steady decline in the CPGB membership during the 1950s demonstrated its waning influence but the unpopularity of its narratives about American foreign policy were demonstrated in September 1950 when US Air Force pilots accidentally killed seventeen British soldiers in Korea. For the *Daily Worker*, the incident was symptomatic of the industrialised nature of American warfare and the Pentagon’s questionable tactics. The communist newspaper claimed that the US was ‘participating in a reactionary war which is being waged to make the Americans masters of Korea’ and condemned the ‘vicious saturation bombing’ and ‘traditions of slap-happy bombing.’⁵⁴ Most of the press sympathised with Attlee’s claim that the fatalities were ‘an inevitable consequence of such operations we must face’ despite some reports that American photographers at the scene were targeted with abuse.⁵⁵ When similar events were depicted in Simon Kent’s 1953 novel *A Hill in Korea* which was adapted for film two years later, there were few signs of the sentiments voiced on the far left. Some readers

⁵² R. H. S. Crossman, ‘The Cold War’, reprinted in *The Politics of Socialism* (New York: Athenaeum, 1965), 167.

⁵³ ‘Postbag: Rank and File Opinions on Korea’, *Firefighter*, October 1950, 13-4; ‘Facts on Korea’, *Metal Worker*, July 1950, 206-7; ‘What a TUC Leader Saw in Korea’, *Metal Worker*, August 1950, 7.

⁵⁴ ‘Air-borne Savages’, *Daily Worker*, 20 September 1950, 1.

⁵⁵ ‘Bombing Mistake: Mr. Attlee’s Thanks for U.S. Sympathy’, *Manchester Guardian*, 26 September 1950, 8; ‘Bombing of Britons a Tragic Error’, *Reynolds News*, 24 September 1950, 1.

or viewers would undoubtedly have noticed parallels but the nationality of the pilots who drop napalm bombs on a group of British troops was omitted and the plot focused more on the comradeship and masculinity of the soldiers.

Establishment opinion-makers strove to prevent such views from undermining the Atlanticism of the major political parties and organisations. After receiving critical resolutions from its activists, Labour's NEC distributed a response to some of the more common lines of criticism. Regarding the Anglo-American relationship, it sought to discourage public statements about the disagreements between the two countries. It noted that 'British differences and agreements on foreign policy with the United States inevitably change from time to time' and reminded activists that 'the present [Democratic] American Administration is more sympathetic to British views than any alternative [...] which might be imagined as its successor.'⁵⁶ Though there was little open dissent in the mainstream press or Parliament at the outset of the Korean War, public opinion research revealed signs that some Britons questioned the orthodox interpretations of the Cold War and American foreign policy. Respondents to M-O's News Quotas and Directives in late 1950 often voiced doubts about Washington's aims or questioned the rationale for the Cold War. The US was variously described as 'bombastic,' 'the war mongers of the world,' and 'imperialists' whilst one interviewee noted that 'I think everyone's afraid of the Atom Bomb that America will drop there + Russia will retaliate.'⁵⁷ Another respondent expressed a view similar to the communist criticism when he reported that his colleagues 'don't see why America should go poking her nose in the dispute between the North + the South – that's their own quarrel – a sort of Civil War – + we should keep out.'⁵⁸ There were various attempts to discourage such views but the media was reluctant to publicise details which could damage the US's reputation. Reports of a massacre of suspected communists by South Korean police were suppressed by proprietor of the *Picture Post* Edward Hulton and the BBC rejected a story by journalist René

⁵⁶ 'The Horsham Resolution', January 1951, International Sub-Committee of the NEC, LHASC.

⁵⁷ M, 48, D, Postman, 10 August 1950, TC9/2/C; M, 60, D, Bus Cleaner, 12 July 1950, TC9/2/C; M, 50, D, Service Gas Layer, 14 August 1950, TC9/2/C; F, 50, B, No Occupation, 13 July 1950, TC9/2/A, MOA.

⁵⁸ M, 35, D, Timber Yard Worker, 30 June 1950, TC9/2/A, MOA.

Cutforth about the American use of napalm in the Far East.⁵⁹ The TUC frequently sought to allay any doubts amongst its affiliated trade councils and trade unions and counter the influence of communist criticisms of British foreign policy. When it received queries from organisations which had received Jack Gaster's *Korea ... I Saw the Truth* — which accused the US of massacring civilians and using bacteriological weapons in the Far East — the TUC warned that Gaster was a 'well-known member of the Communist Party' and reported that his political background prohibited him from attending union meetings.⁶⁰

Although anxieties grew about the prevalence of anti-Americanism, opinion polls suggested that suspicion of the Soviet Union was more prevalent than similar attitudes towards the United States. A BIPO poll conducted in February 1951 shortly after a highpoint in Cold War tension reported that 77 percent of the British public disapproved of the role played by Russia in world affairs whilst only 3 percent approved of its actions. By contrast, the actions of Washington were more popular if not entirely positive; in the same survey the US received disapproval from 35 percent yet approval from 40 percent of respondents.⁶¹ Although the precise figures fluctuated to some degree for the remainder of the decade, this relative distrust of the USSR was a constant. For most Britons, the Kremlin was responsible for the onset of the Cold War, blamed for diplomatic misunderstandings and regarded as the more likely to instigate a third world war. When the 1959 Council of Foreign Ministers at Geneva failed to reach agreement about the future of Germany, the results were typical in that 53 percent blamed Moscow for the lack of progress whereas only 17 percent made the same claim about Washington.⁶² Even majorities of the Labour and Liberal voters — who were most likely to be suspicious or ambivalent about American aims — provided hostile views about the USSR. In 1950, most respondents from supporters of all major parties were reported as

⁵⁹ John Newsinger, *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire* (London: Bookmarks, 2006), 214-5.

⁶⁰ Jack Gaster, *I Saw the Truth ...* (London: Farleigh, 1952). Letter from TUC Organisation Department to Mr R. T. Jenner, Oxford Trades Council, 26 June 1952, MSS.292/951.9/1, MRC.

⁶¹ BIPO Survey 230, February 1951, CCO 180/21/3/32, CPA.

⁶² BIPO Survey Ref 59/73, June 1959, CCO 180 21/3/56, CPA.

stating that the USSR was intent on world domination and 52 percent of Britons stated that the government's policy towards Russia was 'not firm enough.'⁶³

Despite Tom Harrisson's warnings about anti-Americanism in 1947, by the 1950s M-O similarly reported that the USSR was less popular than the US. After surveying its panel of voluntary observers in August 1950, analysts for the organisation concluded that 'Russians are the least popular of all' but stressed that 'it must be remembered that attitudes towards them tend to take a largely political form, with the result that, whilst they have an unpopular Government favourable opinion of them as a nation must be handicapped.'⁶⁴ In 1954, it concluded that:

Great goodwill for America, which current fears have done little to undermine, still exists in this country; and there is certainly more *actual* goodwill for America than there is *actual* goodwill for Russia. Equally, in terms of present actualities, Russia is more disliked than America.⁶⁵

Not only was there relative distrust of the USSR compared with the US but polls also showed that a majority of the British public often reported their approval of America. Polling by the United States Information Agency reported that 57 percent of Britons in 1958 and 59 per cent in 1960 had a 'favourable opinion of the United States.'⁶⁶ This evidence that the Soviet Union more frequently attracted negativity than the US raises questions about the reasons for the growth in the warnings about anti-American views in Britain. These opinion polls were extensively reported in the press yet there were never the same concerns about anti-Sovietism or anti-Russianism. It was not only the superpowers that attracted unfavourable views; Germans continued to attract prejudices after having been Britain's enemy in two world wars whilst

⁶³ BIPO Survey 214, September 1950, CCO 180/21/3/26, CPA. The percentages endorsing this perspective were smaller amongst Britons between 21 and 29, those who were 'very poor' and Labour/Liberal voters. Nonetheless, in every category over half identified the USSR as the country which wanted to dominate the world. BIPO Survey 215A, October 1950, CCO 180/21/3/27, CPA. Responses to this question differed sharply along party lines, as 70 percent of Conservatives adopted the attitude compared with 40 percent of Labour voters.

⁶⁴ 'Attitudes to Three Nationalities', January 1951, SxMOA 1/1/3/128, MOA.

⁶⁵ FR/51, 'American and Russian', April/May 1954, MOA.

⁶⁶ John Lyons, *America in the British Imagination*, 49.

Australians were also regarded as naive and the French were labelled volatile or unstable.

Atlanticist Consensus

Anti-communism was not the only reason for the growth in the close Anglo-American relationship and, though both parties were inclined to portray the alliance as a purely pragmatic consequence of international realities, others noted the importance of other motivations. As James Callaghan, then Labour MP and future Prime Minister, put it when he remembered the period at the end of the Cold War, the 'facts were self-evident and they led to the apparent conclusion that, although it was vital to rebuild Europe, we would assist from outside in joint partnership with the United States.'⁶⁷ The circumstances of the wartime development of the 'special relationship' were partly responsible for the continued attempts to cultivate the alliance after 1945. That senior figures from both parties had served in Churchill's War Cabinet ensured that both frontbenches had a stake in the continuation of the policies established in wartime. With Attlee, Churchill, Bevin and Eden filling the major policy-making roles for their parties after 1945, there was continuity in the personnel responsible for international affairs. Both organisations portrayed themselves as the best custodian of the 'special relationship' and denigrated their rivals' handling of the alliance. According to Conservatives, Labour had in office overseen the deterioration in the links with Washington but the left accused their opponents of favouring a partnership within which Britain was subordinate to the US. Although sections of the left demanded a radical approach to foreign policy, for Labour it was important to demonstrate to the public that it was competent in managing international issues and a way of doing this was supporting the status quo. Opinion polls routinely showed that the party was viewed by the public as the less capable at managing international policy, findings of which its leaders were acutely aware given that Shadow Foreign Secretary Aneurin Bevan, in 1958, felt the need explicitly to dismiss what was

⁶⁷ James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (London: Collins, 1987), 90.

still the 'prevalent myth.'⁶⁸ Whilst there were ideological reasons for the party's Atlanticism, this perception of the party's weakness likely contributed to its unwillingness to challenge the consensus about the Anglo-American relationship.

As well as these political considerations which encouraged support for the alliance, the idea that the Anglo-American relationship was inevitable due to their similar outlook and values was also voiced by various political constituencies. At summits between successive Prime Ministers and Presidents, language was utilised which emphasised the importance of these features of the alliance. Notions of a unique Anglo-American political outlook had been invoked since the late nineteenth century after a period of diplomatic rapprochement following the Wars of Independence. Based on Social Darwinist ideas about the inevitability of competition within a dynamic hierarchy of races, Anglo-Saxondom stressed the unique set of values and interests advocated by Britain and the US. For Srdjan Vucetic, this idea was 'hegemonic at all levels of discourse, including foreign policy' and it also retained its appeal in the twentieth century.⁶⁹ Despite being influenced by contrasting ideological traditions, Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were both exponents of the superiority of the values of the English-Speaking people and Wilson frequently noted his admiration for the British Parliamentary system.⁷⁰ Arriving in Britain in 1959, President Eisenhower told crowds that 'I did not have to come here to assure you or the British people that the American people stand with them, strongly, firmly and determinedly in the defence of freedom, liberty and the dignity of man. You people know that we feel that way.'⁷¹ In a

⁶⁸ When asked in a BIPO survey in September 1954 to identify the party best able to handle foreign policy, the replies were 45% Conservative, 27% Labour, 6% Liberal, Others 3%, Don't Know 21%. These results were broadly the same when repeated two years later and in October 1957 the figures for the two major parties were Conservatives 39% and Labour 26%. BIPO Survey 413A, September 1954, CCO 180/21/1/1, CPA. Similar results were recorded in BIPO Survey 471, September 1956, CCO 180/21/1/2, CPA; BIPO Survey, October 1957, CCO 180/21/1/2, CPA; *LPACR* 1958, 186.

⁶⁹ Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations*, 27-8.

⁷⁰ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (London: Yale University Press, 1987), 126-34.

⁷¹ 'We All Like Ike', British Pathé Newsreel, 31 August 1959, <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/we-all-like-ike>, last accessed 7 December 2013.

‘fireside chat’ broadcast around the world, the President and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan agreed about the importance of the shared faith in justice, freedom and liberty.

These arguments were less popular with the British public, which showed its eagerness to retain a degree of independence from the US. A BIPO poll conducted in 1952 reported that only 23 percent agreed that Britain and America ‘are natural allies and should always stick together’ whilst 53 percent endorsed the view that the two countries ‘should stick together on most things but Britain should remain independent.’⁷² When the prospect of a formalised Anglo-American association was put to the panel of an Anglo-American edition of the BBC’s *Brains Trust* in 1950, the panellists were sceptical and in agreement that co-operation should be on a broader basis between North America and Western Europe. Labour MP Christopher Mayhew suggested that ‘we’ve got to have a general approach to unity on a three-fold basis – Commonwealth, Europe and the United States’ and the broadcaster Bill Corbett argued that ‘the salvation of the democracies is in Western Union and Europe combining with Britain with our great friend and ally, America, coming into closer contact with us.’⁷³ Conservatives and upper class respondents were most likely to advance arguments and language emphasising Anglo-American similarities but there was nonetheless evidence of support for this idea in the responses to Directives of the disproportionately left-wing M-O. A 65 year-old female retired welfare worker described that towards ‘those [Americans] of Anglo-Saxon descent, I feel a kinship + a friendliness that I do not for any other national. As a Nation I trust them more than I do any other Nation. I have greater trust in their judgement + their word.’⁷⁴ In the early stages of the Korean War, a male order clerk expected the transatlantic relationship to be important in world affairs and wrote ‘I hope the two nations will draw even closer in the future. The feeling of kinship is increasing.’⁷⁵

⁷² BIPO Survey 304, April/May 1952, CCO 180/21/3/51, CPA.

⁷³ ‘British-American Brains Trust’, 19 April 1950, BBC North American Service, T396, RSL, WAC.

⁷⁴ DR 67, reply to August 1950 Directive, MOA.

⁷⁵ DR 1938, reply to August 1950 Directive, MOA.

Whilst ideas about the sentimental reasons for Anglo-American co-operation were met with a degree of suspicion, both parties incorporated elements of these ideas into their statements on foreign policy. A Labour Party pamphlet on foreign policy claimed in 1952 that close co-operation was not only ‘an instrument for solving temporary problems but [...] the expression of a common inheritance linking the peoples on both sides of the North Atlantic Ocean.’⁷⁶ For Conservatives this idea was expressed more overtly in terms of the common Anglo-Saxon heritage of the two countries. Its manifesto in 1951 stated the party’s intention to preserve the ‘unity of the English-speaking peoples’ who ‘have only to act in harmony to preserve their own freedom and the general peace.’⁷⁷ Although these conceptions of the alliance were met with some scepticism, there were factors beside the anti-communism of the Cold War which encouraged support for the Anglo-American relationship. British politicians from a variety of backgrounds mixed with elites from the US or were influenced by their ideas. In his role in formulating Labour’s foreign policy, Healey moved in transatlantic foreign and defence policy-making circles and was influenced by American international relations theorists and diplomats Hans Morgenthau and George Kennan as well as pessimist philosopher Reinhold Niebuhr in the development of his Hobbesian view of foreign affairs.⁷⁸ This stressed the need for socialists to exercise power in order to achieve their global objectives and, for Healey, the nation state would inevitably remain the main unit of world politics and nationalism was impossible to eradicate. Although Labour politicians were traditionally more predisposed to forging links with their sister European socialist parties, the post-war period witnessed growing left-wing ties with their US counterparts.

Because of the growing diplomatic ties between the two countries and Washington’s efforts to exercise its cultural capital to encourage sympathy for its foreign policy, many MPs were exposed to its soft power. Politicians from both parties embarked on tours of the US funded by the State Department or

⁷⁶ *Labour’s Foreign Policy* (London: Labour Party, 1952), 4.

⁷⁷ *The Manifesto of the Conservative and the Unionist Party* (London: Conservative Party, 1951), 4.

⁷⁸ Healey’s published collection of essays about foreign affairs was dedicated to Kennan. Denis Healey, *When Shrimps Learn to Whistle* (London: Penguin, 1991).

participated in shadowy anti-communist organisations such as the Bilderberg Group.⁷⁹ As well as liaising with their American counterparts with the common objective of preventing Soviet expansionism, many British politicians had an enthusiasm about American politics and culture which pre-dated the Cold War. The memoirs and diaries of British policy-makers were replete with references to relationships with politicians and officials across the Atlantic. Gaitskell reported in his diary in 1950 that ‘I think it must be an event in anybody’s life when he first crosses the Atlantic, noting that he ‘felt quite boyish’ and as Labour leader encouraged his colleagues to make similar trips.⁸⁰ George Brown — whose memoirs were named after the Frank Sinatra song *My Way* — was ridiculed after boasting on television of his intimacy with John F. Kennedy after the President’s assassination in 1963. Brown was not unusual in exaggerating his personal connections with American politicians; many Britons were struck by the power which resided in Washington and were eager to stress their contacts and friendships in the US. Conservative Colonial Secretary Oliver Lyttelton remembered several wartime meetings with Franklin Roosevelt, describing the President as having ‘treated me with almost paternal affection, and exhibited at times an indiscretion in talking to me which is one of the most flattering ways by which a man can show friendship and trust.’⁸¹ Both parties’ leaderships were keen to boast their credentials as Atlanticists and custodians of the ‘special relationship.’ Labour accused its right-wing rivals of pursuing an overly subservient relationship with Washington whilst Conservatives argued that the Attlee Government had led to the deterioration of the wartime Anglo-American links.

This familiarity with US officials, journalists and politicians was also true of the sections of the Labour Party which were sceptical about the Anglo-American relationship. In her memoirs, Jennie Lee, who was Bevan’s wife and a Labour MP who was amongst the critics of the ‘special relationship,’ remembered the ‘constant stream of American friends [who] were received

⁷⁹ Lawrence Black, “‘The Bitterest Enemies of Communism’: Labour Revisionists, Atlanticism and the Cold War’, *Contemporary British History*, 15, 3 (2001), 26-62.

⁸⁰ Philip Williams (ed), *The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell, 1945-56*, 3 November 1950, 201-202.

⁸¹ Oliver Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London: Bodley Head, 1962), 308.

happily, indeed, lovingly, into our home.’ Citing contacts such as Ed Murrow, Walter Lippmann and Bill Shirer, she noted that though they often disagreed with their guests, they ‘enjoyed exchanging views with our American friends, whether from the newspaper world, Hollywood, trade unions or the business community, as much as they enjoyed Nye’s far-ranging, stimulating comments on all the great problems of the day.’⁸² For all their complaints about American foreign policy, its ideological composition or cultural output, these figures operated within a political system in which it was common and frequent to have links with their counterparts across the Atlantic. David C. Williams — an American sent to Britain in 1946 by the Union for Democratic Action to ‘act as the unofficial ambassador of American progressives and as a competent and sure source of information — had great autonomy in shaping *Tribune’s* American coverage in the late 1940s. Despite leaving the journal in 1951, Williams and fellow American officials such as William C. Gausmann continued to mix in Labour left circles.⁸³ Crossman’s diary often showed meetings with American Embassy officials but given his willingness to criticise Washington, his relationship with these contacts was at times acrimonious. When his column in the *Sunday Pictorial* warned about General Douglas MacArthur’s role in US policy-making, he was rebuked by American official Julius Holmes. However, in response Crossman defended his article in a way that suggested he was fully aware that his writing could have an impact in America as he argued ‘I wanted to express in quotable form, for trans-Atlantic consumption, something of the temper of the House of Commons.’⁸⁴ These ties did not prevent the ‘Bevanites’ from voicing critical views about the Anglo-American relationship nor were they the sole factor for the alliance with the US. But the personal and cultural ties augmented the various political and economic motivations for the alliance. Such links simply did not exist in the case of the Soviet Union and were much fewer even in relation to many of Britain’s allies within NATO.

⁸² Jennie Lee, *My Life with Nye* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), 183. Lee also noted that it was more difficult at the time to obtain Russian contacts.

⁸³ Hugh Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War*, 18-9.

⁸⁴ Letter from Richard Crossman to Julius Holmes, 6 December 1950, Richard Crossman Papers, MSS 154-3-AU-1-239-512, MRC.

Against the Cold War

Despite the agreement about the need to contain the Soviet Union and the consensus about the Anglo-American relationship there were also regular doubts, criticism and opposition to aspects of US foreign policy. The British left had the most difficulty reconciling the Cold War and Anglo-American relationship with its longstanding values and perceptions of foreign policy. Since its foundation, Labour had encompassed a variety of approaches to foreign policy and the question of whether a socialist government should advocate a break with the balance of power orthodoxies of the Foreign Office. Attlee implied in 1937 that it advanced a clear alternative when he identified a 'deep difference of opinion between the Labour Party and the Capitalist parties on foreign policy.'⁸⁵ Whilst Attlee lost his radical zeal when in office, there were regular calls for a 'socialist' international agenda from Labour's rank-and-file throughout the 1950s but what this meant in practice was vague. The left combined strands of internationalism, working-class solidarity and pacifism which caused doubts about elements of the alliance with Washington with anti-capitalism, residual respect for the USSR and ambition for socio-economic progress in the developing world. As well as having to amalgamate these diverse views, the party's leaders were required to meld the demands for radicalism with the need to build electoral coalitions and coherent programmes for office.

Many of the left's beliefs about foreign policy long pre-dated the Cold War, the growth of Washington's ascendancy in the West and the Anglo-American relationship. Its internationalism — broadly defined as support for international arbitration through multilateral organisations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations — had developed during the inter-war period at a time when the party recruited significant numbers of supporters from the declining Liberal Party.⁸⁶ Despite Labour's frequent and public conflict on international policy, for Rhiannon Vickers it was by the 1950s 'largely united on the basic principles

⁸⁵ C. R. Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective* (London: Gollancz, 1937), 226.

⁸⁶ For information about the growth of Labour's internationalism and its limits see Henry Winkler, *British Labour Seeks a Foreign Policy, 1900-1940* (London: Transaction, 2005).

of a Labour foreign policy based on internationalism, commitment to the UN and the international rule of law.’⁸⁷ Indeed, whilst Labour’s policy statements consistently tried to balance its Atlanticism with its support for the UN, the wider party was reluctant to accept that these goals were equally important.⁸⁸ Pamphlets and leaflets published by prospective Labour MPs before the 1950 General Election included a more diverse range of statements than those advanced by the party’s leadership. Being ideologically equidistant to both superpowers appeared more important than the ‘special relationship’ and one prospective MP noted that ‘Britain, in partnership with the Commonwealth, must be independent both of the United States and the Soviet Union, and must continue to play her part through the United Nations to keep the peace of the world.’⁸⁹ Although the statements were diverse, candidates were far more likely to praise Britain’s links with the Commonwealth or Western Europe and called for a Labour Government to promote socio-economic programmes in the developing world. When Labour’s National Executive Committee canvassed opinions on foreign policy in 1952, it received diverse responses from activists, many of whom did not share the leadership’s Atlanticism.⁹⁰ On the subject of the Anglo-American relationship, *Problems of Foreign Policy*, a discussion pamphlet distributed to the rank-and-file, asked supporters whether Britain could survive without American help, how best Britain could influence Washington, and if the Atlantic Community ‘should be developed into a closely knit union.’⁹¹ The party leadership’s pursuit of a close relationship with the US was not a shared goal of local organisations. According to the party’s analysis of the responses, correspondence about the Anglo-American alliance revealed

⁸⁷ Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World Volume Two* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 29.

⁸⁸ See for example *Labour and the New Society* (London: Labour Party, 1950).

⁸⁹ Rowland W. Casasola, Leaflet for Manchester Moss Side Constituency 1950, LP/ELEC/1950/1, LHASC.

⁹⁰ The party received replies from 91 constituency parties, 105 ward parties, 15 individuals, 4 trade union branches and 5 League of Youth Branches. For the full summary of the results see ‘Analysis of Comments on Discussion Pamphlet “Labour’s Foreign Policy”, [n.d], Papers of the International Sub-Committee of the National Executive Committee, LHASC.

⁹¹ *Problems of Foreign Policy* (London: Labour Party, 1952), 7.

that most respondents advocated ‘decreasing Britain’s political and economic dependence on the USA.’⁹²

The support for American foreign policy in Korea at the outset of the conflict did not prevent periodic protests when Washington’s seemed to pursue its objectives without sufficient reference to the multilateral bodies. With US General Douglas MacArthur representing the American army, NATO and the United Nations in the Far East, there were questions as to whether Britain or the UN could exercise sufficient control over the operation. When UN soldiers crossed the 38th parallel and invaded North Korea in October 1950, there were complaints that the action had been undertaken without proper authorisation – allegations which increased in intensity after the decision led to the Chinese entry into the conflict. Similar doubts were again raised in 1952 following the US bombing of Chinese power stations on the Yalu River. Labour MP Tom Driberg was reported as condemning this ‘crazy irresponsible and wicked action by the American forces’ whilst the *Daily Mirror* bemoaned a general lack of western direction and strategy in the Far East.⁹³

Despite the protests about this incident, though, the opposition from Labour was diluted by the Atlanticist majority within the party. When two meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) discussed the Yalu raids, neither of the resolutions proposed for debate in the House of Commons offered a call for Britain to abandon the Atlantic Alliance, NATO or cease to co-operate in Korea. Attlee was reported to have altered the leadership’s statement after pressure from MPs but the ensuing resolution noted that it ‘regrets the failure of Her Majesty’s Government to secure effective consultation prior to recent developments’ and ‘considers that improved arrangements should now be made to enable such consultation to take place between the Governments principally concerned on issues of United Nations policy in the Far East.’⁹⁴ The *Daily Mirror* reported Labour MPs’ annoyance at the ‘middle-of-the-road motion’

⁹² This was the response of 22 constituency parties, 19 ward parties, 4 individuals, 1 trade union branch and 1 League of Youth Branch.

⁹³ ‘Not Told of the Yalu Raids’, *Manchester Guardian*, 30 June 1952, 4; ‘Confusion and Bombs’, *Daily Mirror*, 27 June 1952, 5.

⁹⁴ Minutes of a Meeting of the PLP, 1 July 1952, Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) Papers, LHASC.

which ‘offers no serious challenge to the Government’s policy’ but the alternative was still cautious.⁹⁵ Moved by Aneurin Bevan and Fenner Brockway, an alternative statement called for the condemnation of ‘not merely the lack of consultation about the timing of the raids but also the launching of the raids at a critical time in the truce negotiations.’⁹⁶ Whilst the US was not mentioned in this second resolution, it was aimed more at criticising Washington than the Labour leadership’s comments which focused on criticising the Conservative Government.

Although the press emphasised these ostensible divisions within the Labour Party, the critics of the Anglo-American relationship who were led by Bevan were cautious and equivocal in their protests. Despite acquiring a reputation for anti-Americanism, Aneurin Bevan and his supporters on the left — who provided the most sustained critique of the Anglo-American relationship in the early 1950s — were reluctant to call for Britain to sever the links with Washington. Before Attlee’s visit to Washington in December 1950, the Keep Left Group reported that ‘the Anglo-American Alliance is not everything’ and ‘Britain has to take account of all of the free world.’⁹⁷ Even when Bevan resigned from office with fellow ministers Harold Wilson and John Freeman in April 1951, there were questions amongst his allies on the left as to why he had not been more outspoken sooner about plans for rearmament.⁹⁸ During the remainder of the period, the ‘Bevanites’ (as they were known in the press) had to reconcile their support for NATO with their criticisms of the Anglo-American relationship. Bevan’s speeches and articles varied in the elements of US-UK co-operation that he criticised. In his resignation speech in the House of Commons, he was almost neutralist in tone when he claimed that Britain ‘has a great message for the world which is distinct from that of America or that of the

⁹⁵ ‘Korean Censure ‘too mild’ for the Bevanites’, *Daily Mirror*, 28 June 1952, 12.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Minutes of a Meeting of the Keep Left Group, 30 November 1950, LP/RICH/2/2/2, LHASC.

⁹⁸ Following Bevan’s resignation, Labour MP Tom Driberg noted ‘It may be said, shouldn’t they have resigned last January—when the crucial decision to raise the rearmament figure from the just possible figure of £3,600 millions to the extravagantly impossible £4,700 millions was forced on the British Government by Washington.’ Tom Driberg, *The Best of Both Worlds* (London: Phoenix House, 1953), 7.

Soviet Union.’⁹⁹ *One Way Only*, the pamphlet published by the resigning ministers but written with the help of Crossman and Foot, was more cautious. Its authors suggested that the danger of the USSR had been exaggerated and claimed that the expenditure on rearmament should be diverted to socio-economic programmes in the developing world. However, the triumvirate argued that calls for a ‘Third Force’ had been ‘killed’ by the ‘actions of the Soviet Government, the force of economic circumstances [and] the fears of isolation.’¹⁰⁰ Despite complaining about Washington’s anti-communist policies in Europe and the Far East, they argued that ‘We do not, of course, suggest that the alliance should be broken’ but that ‘British initiatives should be taken to rectify the lop-sided nature of the alliance.’¹⁰¹

Bevan’s and his supporters’ attitudes towards NATO and the ties with the US oscillated until the politician’s death in 1960. Although he was critical of aspects of British foreign policy, Bevan was also ambitious and wanted to contribute to the shaping of Labour’s international programme, a fact which prevented too outspoken criticism. When he had front bench positions, his objections tended to be less pronounced than when speaking with freedom from the backbenches. The endorsement for the Atlantic Alliance evident in *One Way Only* was less central in his 1952 publication *In Place of Fear*. Criticising the Republican influence on US politics, he noted that ‘concerted and sustained collective action is rendered impossible in nations whose policies are determined by pressure groups representing limited and often anti-social interests.’¹⁰² Reviving the possibility of a political bloc equidistant of both superpowers, he claimed that it ‘would be fatal if European people were given the impression that they had to choose between two streams of intervention, Russian or American.’ Besides seeming to equate the aims and objectives of the US and USSR, he referred to NATO when he urged ‘increasing emphasis on the role of the United Nations and less on regional pacts, for these tend to wear

⁹⁹ Aneurin Bevan House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 23 April 1951, Volume 487, Column 38.

¹⁰⁰ Aneurin Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman, *One Way Only* (London: Tribune, 1951), 11.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 13.

¹⁰² Aneurin Bevan, *In Place of Fear* (London: Heinemann, 1952), 122.

the appearance of instruments of dominant Powers.’¹⁰³ In *Tribune* and *New Statesman* — the main forums for left-wing protests in the early 1950s — various commentators stressed that the alliance needed to be recalibrated rather than abandoned. British policy-makers, it was argued, were squandering opportunities to exert influence over their American ally. The *New Statesman* editorialised in 1951 that Britain needed to be vocal when criticising American policies because unequal partnership threatened the alliance. It stressed that American-European relations ‘have become less a frank exchange of opinions about the future policy of the Atlantic alliance than a continued attempt by the United States to conciliate or frighten its associates into a precarious unity.’ Britain, it argued, ‘alone has the power and prestige to make its voice heard across the Atlantic.’¹⁰⁴ The subservience to the US that they perceived from both parties was believed to be unnecessary because Britain had skills and assets which gave it influence to change policies pursued by Washington. Freeman argued that:

We are still more important to America than any other of her allies; we are the only country in Europe on whose resistance to genuine aggression she can really count. We provide her with her only secure base on this side of the Atlantic and the only fairly secure industrial potential. Moreover, we have the influence in much of the world – Africa and Asia, for instance – which, through the crassness of MacArthurism, has largely eluded her. America needs us as much as we need her.¹⁰⁵

The perception on the Labour left that Britain could influence American policy continued even as the US’s international economic and political position grew throughout the remainder of the decade. In 1957, Thomas Balogh, a Hungarian economist linked with the Bevanites, rejected the Atlanticist fears that

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 133.

¹⁰⁴ ‘The Time for Plain Speech’, *New Statesman*, 6 January 1951, 1.

¹⁰⁵ John Freeman and Denis Healey, *Rearmament How Far?* (London: Fabian Society, 1951), 12. See also Thomas Balogh, ‘Why don’t we stand up to the Americans?’ *Tribune*, 21 September 1951, 4.

Washington would return to isolationism and argued that 'British bargaining strength in relation to America is far greater than generally thought'.¹⁰⁶

The 'Bevanites' were a heterogeneous collection of figures who would later adopt diverse views about the Anglo-American relationship. When the group voted against the Conservative Government's defence estimates in 1952, they were known as the '57 varieties,' a label which captured the heterogeneity of the protestors. Individuals who would go on to support the relationship and have diverse ideological trajectories and political careers, such as James Callaghan, Harold Wilson and Woodrow Wyatt, were at times involved in the protests. Freeman later served as UK Ambassador to Washington whilst Crossman was known as 'Dick Double Crossman' for his apparent oscillations.¹⁰⁷ A future Prime Minister, Wilson was particularly notable for his changing positions on the subject as his political circumstances altered. After having resigned with Bevan in 1951, his specialism in economic policy gave him an important role amongst the critics of American policy. His 1953 pamphlet *In Place of Dollars* critiqued the economic policies of Washington and Britain's subservience within the relationship and voiced the concerns about US mass culture which were typical of the left.¹⁰⁸ However, in Downing Street during the 1960s, Wilson attracted the criticism of his former allies on the left of the party by supporting the American war in Vietnam. In retirement, nonetheless, he remembered the post-war creation of the Anglo-American relationship with some scepticism. Washington's cancellation of Lend-Lease was described in terms of 'surrender,' as he noted that 'Britain was in pawn, at the very time Attlee was fighting to exert more influence over the post-war European settlement'.¹⁰⁹

Despite their criticism of the US, the arguments of the so-called Bevanites were complicated enough for them to imagine a time when Washington shared their goals or aims in foreign affairs. As well as their endorsement of the

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Balogh, 'The Political Economy of the Cold War', in T. E. M. McKitterick and Kenneth Younger (eds), *Fabian International Essays* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 73.

¹⁰⁷ Woodrow Wyatt, *Confessions of an Optimist* (London: Collins, 1987), 135.

¹⁰⁸ Harold Wilson, *In Place of Dollars* (London: Tribune, 1953); *LPACR 1960*, 149.

¹⁰⁹ Harold Wilson, *Memoirs: the Making of a Prime Minister* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), 123.

intervention in Korea in June 1950, there were suggestions from this group that they could have a positive influence on American opinion. Richard Acland told his colleagues on the Labour left that ‘both in Britain and on visits which we shall need to make to the States, we should so speak and act as to help the best Americans to “sell” the only workable world formula to the American people as a whole.’ Confident that the US public might sympathise with its criticisms, Acland noted that this could only be achieved if Americans ‘hear us, in our own country, presenting democratic socialism as the only possible means of organising a free community which has the guts to recognise that for a considerable time to come it is bound to remain poor.’¹¹⁰ There were several occasions during which the Labour left identified a symbiosis between their ideas and those of US administration. Although Washington often appeared hostile to aims of the United Nations, after it forced the Conservative Government of Anthony Eden to abandon its invasion of Egypt in 1956, there was brief optimism from Crossman that the US could now be the guarantor of the UN’s international aims. In the *New Statesman*, he described President Eisenhower as ‘an uncomplicated American,’ who ‘believes that world war can only be averted if he, as leader of America, makes the United Nations work – even when it works *against* America’s friends’.¹¹¹ The fact that the chief critics shared assumptions and beliefs with the Labour leadership demonstrates some of the problems associated with drawing pro and anti-American dichotomies and the conclusion that the party experienced ‘a division between Atlanticists and those suspicious of the USA which continues to this day.’¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Richard Acland, ‘In Search of Socialist Philosophy for the Middle for the Twentieth Century’, 7 November 1949, LP/RICH/2/2/3, LHASC.

¹¹¹ R. H. S. Crossman, ‘The Eisenhower Doctrine’, *New Statesman*, 1 December 1956, 688. Emphasis in Original. See also ‘The Nightmare Comes True’, *New Statesman*, 15 December 1956, 777. In 1957 after the promulgation of the Eisenhower Doctrine about American intervention in the Middle East, the journal’s editors described the US as the ‘“an executive agent of the United Nations’. ‘Is there an Eisenhower Doctrine?’ *New Statesman*, 5 January 1957, 4.

¹¹² Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World: The Evolution of Labour’s Foreign Policy, 1900-1951* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 12.

Different Opinions

The internationalism of left-wing activists was not the only emotion which encouraged the left-wing protests about American foreign policy as the critics were also motivated by specific objections to Washington's aims. Because Anglo-American tension was common in the mid-1950s and emphasised in press accounts of international affairs, there was extended debate as to whether this ostensible animosity was a sign of underlying and fundamental conflicts or merely the product of differences in opinion. Writing in 1954, Attlee claimed that it was 'inevitable that even where long-term objectives are the same, differences of opinion in international affairs on particular questions are bound to arise from time to time.'¹¹³ Though the former Prime Minister's comments were likely motivated by a desire to demonstrate the resilience of the 'special relationship,' it was a judgement which contained some truth. Various issues were longstanding causes of conflict with one of the most persistent issues being the two countries' contrasting views about communism and the best way in which to resist its apparent expansionism. Differences could seem more acute given the extent of the British focus on American life. For anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer, the ostensible political, cultural, legal and religious similarities between the two countries meant that 'each group expects the other to be a near replica of itself, and is continually being disillusioned and distressed when this view is proved to be unjustified.'¹¹⁴

Though anti-communism was endorsed across the political spectrum, left-wing complaints about the 'special relationship' were encouraged by residual enthusiasm about the Soviet Union. Russia's reputation as the world's first socialist state earned it the respect of the British left but its popularity was enhanced by the wartime Anglo-Soviet alliance as well as the USSR's apparent economic success and resilience in withstanding invasion by Nazi Germany. Despite the efforts of the British Government to discourage excessive support for the USSR during the Second World War, at times 'some of the admiration

¹¹³ Clement Attlee, 'Britain and America: Common Aims, Different Opinions', *Foreign Affairs*, 32, 2 (1954), 190.

¹¹⁴ Geoffrey Gorer, *The American People: A Study in National Character* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1948), 11.

for Russian courage and fighting power rubbed off on the regime, its ideology and its leaders.’¹¹⁵ Though these sympathies waned as suspicions grew about the aims of Russian foreign policy, there was latent sympathy on the left-wing of the Labour Party into the 1960s which influenced the ideas of leader Harold Wilson and his economic advisers.¹¹⁶ Writers in left-wing *Tribune* expressed confidence in the eventual liberalisation of the Soviet economy and democracy in spite of evidence of political purges. Whereas American McCarthyism inhibited radicalism in the US, British politics contained various individuals who were inter-war communists or who had supported the popular front. One of Labour’s most prominent Atlanticists Denis Healey had called for a socialist revolution in Europe as late as 1945 whilst post-war Chancellor Stafford Cripps had been expelled from the party along with Aneurin Bevan because of their advocacy of a Popular Front with non-affiliated organisations. As Richard Crossman put it in a letter to Hugh Dalton in 1950, sections of the left retained a ‘Russia complex’ and argued that, though many had more mainstream views in the post-war period, ‘many of them have not re-thought the situation and asked why they were wrong in the 1930s.’ This resulted in an ‘uneasy conscience or in sheer mental confusion.’¹¹⁷ As the Cold War entered a phase of rapprochement in the mid-1950s, it was not only the left which was positive about the USSR. After the launch of Sputnik in 1957, Russia’s cultural capital and notoriety for its ability in technological matters increased to such an extent that in 1958 36 percent of Britons believed that the Soviet Union would be the world’s strongest country in a decade.¹¹⁸

Compared with American policy-makers in Washington, Britons were more willing to propose negotiations and summitry with the Soviet Union or the People’s Republic of China: a position which led to allegations of appeasement from some of their US counterparts. This was another arena in which the desire

¹¹⁵ P. M. H. Bell, *John Bull and the Bear: Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union 1941-1945* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990), 186.

¹¹⁶ At Labour’s conferences there were various calls for a ‘socialist’ foreign policy based on links with the USSR. See *LPACR 1954*, 76 and 85; *LPACR 1955*, 182.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Richard Crossman to Hugh Dalton, 24 October 1950, Richard Crossman Papers, MSS 154-3-AU-1-239-512, MRC.

¹¹⁸ BIPO Survey 45, June 1958, CCO 180/21/1/2, CPA. Only 27 percent identified America as the country most likely to be the strongest in a decade.

of some sections of American politics to defeat communism was problematic for the Britons who for the most part sought to contain the ideology. In the Far East, American support for the nationalist regime of Chiang Kai-shek in Formosa conflicted with the British Government's policy of recognising the People's Republic of China. The China Lobby — the group of American Senators and Congressmen who supported an interventionist foreign policy to defeat communism in the Far East — were a source of particular concern. Left-wing concerns about the influence of McCarthyism were exacerbated by the presence of this group, which was described by journalist Norman Mackenzie as a 'conspiracy' against American democracy. Despite his criticism of the aims of the group, Mackenzie remained confident that '[w]e can fight back against the China Lobby, and against all other manifestations of American reaction knowing that at the same time we are helping to defend democracy in America.'¹¹⁹ He called for Britain to work for a reasonable policy in the Far East by continuing to recognise the People's Republic of China and severing relations with Chiang and warned that 'the activities and aims of the China Lobby are equally a threat to our security.'¹²⁰ When Eisenhower's State of the Union Address in 1953 announced the lifting of the American naval blockade between mainland China and Formosa, a move which seemed to encourage an invasion by the Chiang regime, the British left was critical. The *Daily Mirror* described it as a 'perverse and senseless risk' and argued that '[o]nly harm can come of President Eisenhower's decision.'¹²¹

For the left, the differences with Washington were even more acute because these sections of British politics were more likely to believe that communism needed to be contained rather than defeated. The differing perceptions of the threat of communism were again raised during the 1954 Geneva Conference to negotiate an armistice in the war in Indo-China after insurgents had defeated French attempts to re-impose control of the country. The *Daily Herald* was

¹¹⁹ Norman Mackenzie, *Conspiracy for War: A Study of the China Lobby and its Plot against Peace and Democracy in the United States* (London: Union for Democratic Control, 1952), 14-5. The reverse cover of the pamphlet reinforced this message. An advertisement for left-wing American journal the *Nation* had the headline 'There IS another America!'

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 15. Emphasis in Original

¹²¹ 'A Harmful Decision', *Daily Mirror*, 3 February 1953, 7.

typical when it described the insurgents led by Ho Chi Minh as ‘part of the revolution which is transforming Asia, and the mainspring of that revolution is not Communism, but the desire for national independence.’¹²² Added to this were objections about the US’s willingness to conclude agreements and treaties with conservative or authoritarian regimes such as the Franco government in Fascist Spain or those of Chiang Kai-shek in Formosa and Syngman Rhee in South Korea. Particularly as Cold War tensions eased after the death of Stalin and the end of the Korean War in 1953, the fear of the USSR and global bipolarity which marked the early 1950s was less pronounced. In Formosa, too, there were often differing perceptions of the communist threat and recommendations of how to oppose it. After President Eisenhower promised in 1955 that the US would defend Formosa against attack from China, there was enough criticism in Britain for Foreign Office officials to compile a report on the nature of the dissent. The analysis of correspondence from the public revealed that ‘no more than 15 percent’ were supportive of Washington’s response, with one remarking that the Americans ‘have done well to poll 15% of 60 votes.’¹²³ In fact, these results corresponded with polls which suggested that similar percentages of Britons were willing to support Washington’s action in Formosa but officials were inclined to dismiss the importance of such protests. One noted, for example, that ‘the large volume of protest can largely be accounted for by referring to the Communist press [because] “World News” and others incited protest.’¹²⁴

It was true that it was the British left which was most vocal in its protests about US foreign policy and a related strand of the criticism which became more common in the early 1960s was the idea that the objectives of both superpowers were morally comparable. For American Conservatives in particular, this has been regarded as a recurring strand of anti-Americanism because this ‘moral equivalence’ was evidence of the inability or unwillingness of Europeans to realise that the USSR represented a greater threat than the

¹²² ‘Danger, Think!’, *Daily Herald*, 27 April 1954, 4.

¹²³ BIPO Survey 434, January 1955, CCO 180/21/1/1, CPA.

¹²⁴ Minute by P. F. de Zulueta, 2 April 1955, FO 371/115041, TNA.

US.¹²⁵ Events surrounding the failure of the Paris Summit in 1960 demonstrated the complexity of British views about both superpowers. The first meeting of the heads of both superpowers since the onset of the Cold War, the summit had been convened with the aim of resolving tensions over Berlin and to discuss proposals for a nuclear test ban treaty. After a US U-2 spy plane was shot down over the USSR two weeks before the summit, though, the discussions were beset by acrimony with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev leaving before any agreement could be concluded. Many commentators regarded this as another example of Russian intransigence but there were suggestions in the left-wing press that the US bore some responsibility for the diplomatic failure. Most of the attention was on the military personnel who were thought to have ordered the espionage mission before the summit. The *Daily Mirror* editorialised that this was just the latest occasion on which ‘arrogant American Brasshats and military meddlers have tried to show themselves the bosses of American policy’ whilst a *Daily Herald* reporter even wondered if American Service Chiefs had provoked the shooting down of the plane to sabotage the forthcoming summit.¹²⁶ Even Labour’s Atlanticists were not entirely convinced that the US had not exacerbated the situation as Healey told the PLP that there was ‘general agreement that both the USA and USSR had made major blunders and miscalculations.’¹²⁷

It was not only Republican administrations and US military personnel that were criticised for certain international policies or for pursuing a foreign policy without sufficient reference to the United Nations. After the election of Democratic President John Kennedy, the *Guardian* reflected the optimism that a change could occur in American policy and international affairs, noting that the ‘mood of America seems to have changed.’¹²⁸ However, this faith was soon challenged with the US-backed attempted coup in Cuba in 1961, which caused questions as to whether American foreign policy was as benevolent as had been suggested at the outbreak of the Korean War. Because it was a furtive operation

¹²⁵ Paul Hollander, *The Only Superpower: Reflections on Strength, Weakness and Anti-Americanism* (Lanham: Lexington, 2009), 49-58.

¹²⁶ Hugh Pilcher, ‘Britain, too, has her air spies’, *Daily Herald*, 9 May 1960, 1.

¹²⁷ Minutes of a Meeting of the PLP, 25 June 1960, LHASC.

¹²⁸ ‘Farewell to Ike’, *Guardian*, 19 January 1961, 10.

which occurred without the UN having been consulted and breached international law, there were complaints on the left. Atlanticists attempted to make light of the incident but their colleagues were less tolerant.¹²⁹ Resolutions submitted to Labour's NEC expressed the concerns of some of its MPs and officials. A motion by Barbara Castle reported that the party was 'deeply concerned' by the recent events and that it 'condemns the action as we condemned the Tory Government in Suez and the Soviet Government in Hungary.'¹³⁰ The party's draft statement on the subject was no less critical, explaining that it was 'convinced that any such action would lower the prestige of the United States and its administration in whom we have placed great hope, would further endanger the Atlantic Alliance and might endanger progress towards agreement on other international questions.'¹³¹ Although the Atlanticists within the party were less outspoken, they had their own doubts about the intervention because the events threatened to undermine their argument that the character of US politics had undergone a significant change since the 1930s. Privately, Gaitskell described it as a 'great blow' because those in the party who supported a close Anglo-American relationship had 'been basing a good deal of its argument on the claim that things have changed in America.'¹³²

Doubts about the US's unilateralism resurfaced during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when it was feared that the Kennedy administration was acting without proper consultation with international opinion. Although the President's handling of the crisis was praised when it came to a peaceful conclusion, the left-wing press questioned why Washington was sensitive about Russian bases in Cuba given that American bases were located in Turkey. The *Daily Herald* summarised this sentiment when it editorialised that the 'blockade is an act of

¹²⁹ An article in *Socialist Commentary* described the failed invasion as a 'temporary setback' and reported that if 'the general policy put forward by the Administration's spokesmen is followed up with effective action, the prospects for democratic social revolution in Latin America will be good.' Robert Alexander, 'Two Roads to Revolution', *Socialist Commentary*, June 1961, 10-13. See also

¹³⁰ 'Cuba: Motion Submitted by Mrs Castle', [n.d.], Papers of the International Sub-Committee of the NEC, LHASC.

¹³¹ 'Draft Statement: Cuba', [n.d.], Papers of the International Sub-Committee of the NEC, LHASC.

¹³² Cited in Mark Phythian, *The Labour Party, War and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2007), 13

force by America against Cuba, an independent country with which America is at war.’ It cited US journalist Walter Lippmann as informing its view that ‘[i]f the American nuclear bases are defensive, then Cuba’s Fidel Castro can claim that so are his.’¹³³ Some Conservatives disputed this idea that the aims of the two superpowers were equivalent; the *Daily Mail* was typical in stressing ‘how much we owe to those US bases and how fundamentally different they have been in conception from the offensive base in Cuba.’¹³⁴ Ultimately, then, there were various reasons for the British criticism of the foreign policy of their closest ally. The broad agreement between the two governments about the need to withstand Soviet aggression was complicated by their contrasting interpretations of specific aspects of international affairs and this informed the occasional doubts about US foreign policy.

Conclusions

During the long 1950s, the Cold War between Washington and Moscow had a major bearing on British perceptions of the United States and Americans. The nascent Anglo-American relationship was central to foreign policy and the programmes of major political organisations. Despite the growing warnings about anti-Americanism in Britain during the long 1950s, the use of the concept was vague and ill-defined and tended to simplify British attitudes towards the US. The increased usage of the term was more a reflection of the global bipolarity than a sign of greater hostility towards America. In the tension of the Cold War, disagreements were more important given Moscow’s efforts to undermine the Anglo-American alliance. Rather than there being consistent pro and anti-American groupings in Britain, attitudes towards Washington’s policies in the Cold War were more complicated. Attitudes towards both superpowers evolved with changing circumstances but it was the Soviet Union than attracted the greater hostility, suspicion and negativity in post-war Britain. Not only was the Atlanticism of the political system based on anti-communism but such attitudes were espoused more widely. This does not mean to say that

¹³³ ‘The real challenge’, *Daily Herald*, 25 October 1962, 1.

¹³⁴ ‘Mystery of the Two Ks’, *Daily Mail*, 25 October 1962, 1.

the alliance with Washington was always endorsed as various features of American policy were perennial sources of concern in Britain. In spite of the warnings about anti-Americanism, the objections about the nature of US anti-communism ought to be classified as logical criticism based on differences of opinion rather than pathological hostility. Only the far left — which was a marginal force in post-war British politics — articulated a consistent critique of American foreign policy; the dissent from the ‘Bevanites’ on the mainstream left was heterogeneous and complicated by the protestors’ political ambitions and even shared many of the assumptions of Atlanticists. Though it was the British left who had the greatest difficulty in accepting the need for a close Anglo-American relationship and objected to certain aspects of US foreign policy, conservatives also voiced periodic criticisms of the alliance or American international aims. These concerns focused on the related question of Washington’s policies towards Britain’s imperial territories and continuing colonial responsibilities. Chapter Three explores issues which provoked critical commentary amongst some conservatives: the UK’s changing international role and Washington’s policies towards the British Empire and Commonwealth.

Chapter Three

End of Empire

Speaking at West Point military academy in November 1962, former American Secretary of State Dean Acheson caused controversy in the UK when he claimed that Britain ‘has lost an Empire and has not yet found a role.’ The *Daily Mail* editorialised that Acheson ‘should have known better’ and noted that ‘like most foreigners,’ he ‘does not understand the Commonwealth.’¹ For the *Daily Express*, the comments amounted to a ‘stab in the back’ and even Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was reported as having stated that Acheson had made the same mistake as Philip of Spain, Louis XIV, Napoleon, the Kaiser and Adolf Hitler in underestimating the UK’s imperial links.² Although his comments were provocative, Acheson’s speech was merely one of the most prominent expressions of a belief that was widely held by the early 1960s. Britain, it was claimed by a wide and politically diverse range of commentators and officials, had experienced a period of ‘decline’ or cultural and political malaise as it encountered economic crises, diplomatic uncertainty and retrenchment in its international position. The apparent alteration in Britain’s world role was most evident *vis-à-vis* the United States. As the leader of the West in the Cold War against the USSR, the largest contributor to NATO, and at the centre of the post-war financial system, Washington wielded unprecedented political, military and economic power. By contrast, in the two decades after 1945, Britain experienced the decolonisation of imperial territories in Asia and Africa and by the early 1960s the prospect of playing a regional role as a member of the European Economic Community.

This chapter analyses the various ways in which the changing roles and responsibilities of both countries affected British attitudes towards the US in the long 1950s. It investigates the responses to American foreign and economic

¹ ‘Alive and Kicking’, *Daily Mail*, 7 December 1962, 1.

² Quoted in David Nunnerley, *President Kennedy and Britain* (London: The Bodley Head, 1972), 1; ‘Mr. Acheson “in error”: Prime Minister’s Reply’, *The Times*, 8 December 1962, 8. In his diary, Macmillan described Acheson as a ‘conceited ass’ but conceded that the public outburst of the speech was a bad sign ‘for we ought to be strong enough to laugh off this kind of thing.’ Peter Catterall (ed), *The Macmillan Diaries: Prime Minister and After, 1957-1966*, 7 December 1962 (London: Pan, 2012 [2011]), 522-3.

policies which affected Britain's imperial links and spheres of influence. Though the nascent Anglo-American relationship was crucial to British foreign policy, Atlanticism existed alongside longstanding links with the Empire and Commonwealth and this chapter examines the tension between these two goals and how far they were reconcilable. Given the recent challenges to 'declinist' interpretations of British history, such a focus requires some caution, even though decline seems evident in Britain's relative standing in the international arena. Ideas about Britain's 'decline' could be as much cultural inventions or weapons in political debates as a reflection of economic realities.³ Indeed, this chapter demonstrates the complexities beneath this ostensibly simple process as the US's changing international role elicited a range of responses. Although there was outspoken hostility about US anti-colonialism amongst some right-wing groups and individuals, others were more relaxed about the possible effects of both countries' changing roles. Even as the debate about the UK's existential crisis gathered pace after the Suez Crisis in 1956, there was reluctance to concede that Britain was no longer a 'Great Power' and few questioned the belief that it retained its capacity to influence American politicians and officials.

Conservatives, Empire and Anti-Colonialism

As the Cold War Anglo-American relationship became increasingly important to British foreign policy after 1945, it had to exist alongside longstanding imperial commitments. At the beginning of the 1950s, links with the Commonwealth and Empire were central to Britain's foreign and economic policy. Although India, Burma and Ceylon had been granted independence by the Attlee Government in 1947, Britain retained overseas territories and the associated cultural influence and economic interests in Asia and Africa.

³ The recent literature on decline and 'declinism' is extensive. See for example David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jim Tomlinson, *The Politics of Decline: Understanding Post-War Britain* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2014 [2000]); Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton (eds), *An Affluent Society? Britain's post-war "golden age" revisited* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004); Guy Ortolano, "'Decline" as a Weapon in Cultural Politics', in Wm. Roger Louis, *Penultimate Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 201-14.

Moreover, the Commonwealth — which was then based on the English-speaking UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa — ensured the continuation of amicable relations with Britain's former colonies. Despite differences on questions of how quickly these territories should move towards self-government, the leaders of both parties stressed their devotion to these imperial links. Until the mid-1960s, trade with the Empire and Commonwealth surpassed exports and imports to the US or Western Europe. Though it steadily declined after 1945, British exports to the Commonwealth in 1960 totalled 35.7 percent of total exports whilst Western Europe only amounted to 26.6 percent.⁴ It was not only economics that motivated the preservation of Empire ties as the network of relationships was thought to be a considerable source of British prestige. According to John Darwin, this was evidence that there was 'no sign that British leaders or their advisers gave up their overriding belief that, by hook or by crook, Britain should remain a great world power.'⁵ Whilst sections of the Labour Party were anti-colonialist and called for immediate decolonisation, its leaders were cautious and sympathetic to the Commonwealth. Tory MP Julian Amery even remarked in 1959 that every 'Conservative politician in Britain knows that when he can get a hearing on nothing else from a working-class audience, he can command respect and even enthusiasm if he speaks on the Empire.'⁶ Labour's paternalism towards the imperial territories continued until the end of the period and survived when the movement for independence in sub-Saharan Africa gathered pace in the late 1950s. There was reluctance fully to support the ambitions of nationalists due to anxieties that independence without democratic reforms could lead to racial tension or the deterioration of socio-economic standards. As a result, there were calls for Britain to retain its imperial territories and Attlee wrote in *Socialist Commentary* that there 'must be a period during which the British Government

⁴ D. K. Fieldhouse, 'The Metropolitan Economics of Empire', in Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 88-113.

⁵ John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 126.

⁶ Julian Amery, 'The American Choice', in James Burnham (ed), *What Europe Thinks of Us* (New York: John Day Company, 1953), 153.

must retain control' and this would be a 'time for the rather tender seeds of democratic government to grow.'⁷

Although Britain's relationships with the Empire and Commonwealth were central to the foreign policies of a range of commentators and politicians, Conservatives tended to have greater difficulty reconciling these goals with the nascent Anglo-American alliance. The party's leadership sought to portray its Atlanticism as compatible with its links with the Empire and Commonwealth but activists were sceptical that these relationships were equally important. A delegate at the party's 1950 conference reflected the romantic view that prevailed amongst activists by stressing that the Empire was 'the greatest contribution that the British people have ever given to the history of mankind.'⁸ That the Anglo-American alliance alone was not regarded by its rank-and-file as sufficient was evident during an exchange at the party's 1952 conference. A motion which claimed that 'preservation of freedom in the world depends principally on Anglo-American friendship, co-operation and solidarity' was after protests swiftly broadened to include reference to 'the British Commonwealth of Nations and our association with Western Europe.'⁹ Washington's foreign policy after 1945 and its stance towards the British Empire exacerbated the tension between these two relationships. Anti-colonialism had been apparent in American politics since its independence from Britain in the eighteenth century but was significant in wartime debates about post-war reconstruction. Secretary of State Cordell Hull was amongst the foremost proponents of the multilateral economic system constructed in peacetime which was based on the International Monetary Fund and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Though the US calls for a 'free trade' economic system were endorsed by Whitehall and the liberal sections of the British elite, it was interpreted by some Conservatives as evidence of US efforts to dismantle the Empire.¹⁰ As the State Department's policies increasingly

⁷ Lord Attlee, 'Understanding Africa', *Socialist Commentary*, October 1959, 4-5.

⁸ *71st Annual Conference of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations*, 36.

⁹ *72nd Annual Conference of the Conservative and Unionist Associations*, 30.

¹⁰ Richard N. Gardner, *Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy in Current Perspective: The Origins and the Prospects of Our International Economic Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980 [1956]).

affected Asia, Africa and the Pacific with the onset of the Cold War, there were anxieties that it sought to encroach on British spheres of influence. Complaints about the US's growing international role had already intensified during the Second World War when British and Americans were allied against Nazi Germany. Even within Churchill's War Cabinet, there was some reluctance to accept the Prime Minister's romantic conception of the special relationship. Secretary of State for India Leo Amery often denounced 'American Lebensraum' and worried that after 1945 'the US will come in with as crude and impossible ideas of world economic organisation as it did about world political organization after the last war.' He described Hull as an 'ideologue' with 'nineteenth century' views about free trade.¹¹

The tensions in right-wing circles between these contrasting views of British foreign policy and the relationship with Washington continued after 1945. Compared with Labour and the left, though, Conservatives did not experience the same degree of factional conflict about the Anglo-American relationship and open dissent was confined to marginal groups such as the far right League of Empire Loyalists.¹² The Suez Group was the main forum within the Conservative Party for critics of the Anglo-American relationship. Led by Julian Amery and Captain Charles Waterhouse, the organisation numbered between 28 and 40 MPs and its members voiced disapproval at the apparent loss of British influence in relation to Washington. According to a member of the group Paul Williams, the State Department intended 'to break the British Commonwealth and establish Britain and Europe as satellites of the US defence network.'¹³ If Anglo-American co-operation were to occur in the Middle East, it was claimed that it should be on an equal basis. Throughout the 1950s, British withdrawals from Palestine, Abadan, Sudan and Suez were all attributed by critics to American pressure. In 1957, the *Daily Express* linked these events

¹¹ Wm. Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go! Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill* (London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), 146.

¹² The League of Empire Loyalists undoubtedly had some support amongst conservatives. It polled almost 1,500 votes in the 1957 Lewisham North By-election and the Conservative Party was anxious enough about its appeal to instruct its candidates to distance themselves from this organisation. See Leon Epstein, *British Politics During the Suez Crisis* (London: Pall Mall, 1964), 60 and 101.

¹³ Sue Onslow, *Backbench Debate within the Conservative Party and its Influence on British Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 121.

with instability in post-independence India and Africa, concluding that 'Anti-Colonialism has been the curse of our age. Immense has been the destruction wrought by it.'¹⁴ Under the proprietorship of Canadian Lord Beaverbrook, the *Daily Express* provided the most consistent conservative opposition to the 'special relationship.' Typical were his complaints in 1951 about the growing American cultural and economic presence in the British colony of Jamaica. He described that the 'Americans are on the way to complete control of the island' which was a 'sad situation' because its population 'do not show any desire to relinquish the Empire associations.'¹⁵

Such disapproval at the US's growing international role undoubtedly ran much deeper within the Conservative party and right-wing circles but the organised protests were small and public divisions were for the most part avoided. This was the case when backbench MP Enoch Powell criticised the 'special relationship' in the House of Commons during November 1953. At times associated with the Suez Group, Powell claimed that his view 'of American policy over the past decade has been that it has been steadily and relentlessly directed towards the weakening and destruction of the links which bind the British Empire together.'¹⁶ Although Powell's comments were met with objections from his Conservative colleagues in Parliament, he received supportive correspondence which praised his bravery for publicly voicing doubts on the subject. A bank manager who wrote to Powell noted that 'If only more MPs had the courage to tell the truth about American aims against Britain and the British Empire, it would be far better for all concerned' whilst an army Major implored him to 'continue your efforts to persuade the party leaders, that – although close friendship with America is desirable – it must only be on a basis of complete equality.'¹⁷ The explanation for the differing intensity of Labour and Conservative criticism was more the result of their contrasting mores, conventions and organisations than evidence that the left was more

¹⁴ 'In the name of freedom', *Daily Express*, 15 April 1957, 6.

¹⁵ Letter from Lord Beaverbrook to Brendan Bracken, 15 January 1953, Richard Cockett (ed), *My Dear Max: The Letters of Brendan Bracken to Lord Beaverbrook, 1925-1958* (London: The Historians' Press, 1990), 139-40.

¹⁶ Enoch Powell, HC Deb, *Hansard* 5 November 1953, Volume 520, Column 348.

¹⁷ Letter to Enoch Powell from ALD Lang, 8 December 1953; Letter to Enoch Powell from Major D. Phillips, 6 November 1953, Enoch Powell Papers, POLL 3/1/12, CCC.

‘anti-American’ than its political rivals. According to Leon Epstein, this restraint was the consequence of the party’s upper-class background and the resulting ‘self-imposed discipline flowing from membership in a respectable club.’¹⁸

Whether Epstein’s caricature of right-wing politicians is applicable to its activists is questionable and it is likely that the hierarchical nature of the Conservative Party was more responsible for the relative acquiescence of its MPs. Unlike Labour — which in the form of the party conference and the NEC had various outlets for debate and protest — the Conservative leadership was better able to control political discussions and use the institutions of the party to stifle dissent. Moreover, Churchill and Eden retained a degree of prestige as a result of their prescient warnings about Nazi Germany and wartime leadership which strengthened their positions within the party. This was one example of the ways in which domestic institutions and political contexts affected the intensity and frequency of expressions of negativity or criticism of the US or its foreign policy. Complaints about Washington’s foreign policy and its stance on the British Empire ran much deeper within the party but few were prepared to adopt a position of outspoken opposition. Indeed, it was not only Washington’s anti-colonialism that provoked criticism on Conservative backbenches. During 1955 when the continued American defence of Formosa provoked criticism in Britain, the party’s leaders repeatedly advised its MPs not to endanger the ‘special relationship’ with outspoken protests on the subject. At the Conservatives’ Foreign Affairs Committee in February 1955 after President Eisenhower had alarmed Britain by threatening to defend the nationalist Chinese regime of Chiang Kai-shek in Formosa, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden warned his colleagues about the importance of avoiding Anglo-American tension. He warned that the subject ‘must not be allowed to imperil the Anglo-American front’ and ‘it was better not to say in public what we had said in private; that the sooner America could get rid of the embarrassment of the off-shore islands, and widen the area between Formosa and the mainland the

¹⁸ Leon Epstein, *Britain—Uneasy Ally*, 173.

better.’¹⁹ His successor Harold Macmillan made a similar appeal later that year when he told MPs that ‘the Americans did not like being hustled into decisions’ and that Britain ‘should not push them on the question of trade with China, or Chinese representation in the United Nations, in view of the overriding need for solidarity.’²⁰

Both Eden and Macmillan at times shared their colleagues’ frustration with the US’s policies but usually expressed these privately. Despite claiming in his memoirs that the Anglo-American relationship was ‘a guiding principle throughout my life,’ in his diary Eden was often critical of policy-makers in Washington and the objectives of American foreign policy.²¹ He regarded the post-war loan from the US as having ‘marked finally our dependence on US’ and noted during the Geneva Conference in 1954 that ‘All the Americans want to do is to replace the French and run Indo-China themselves. They want to replace us in Egypt too. They want to run the world.’²² Added to this were various concerns about the abilities of American policy-makers. Macmillan shared these doubts about his American counterparts and the nature of Washington which existed alongside an otherwise Atlanticist outlook. He noted in 1953 that President Eisenhower was ‘very naive and inexperienced; Dulles is ignorant and stupid; some of the old Republicans are hopelessly reactionary – but we have got to get along with them.’²³ For the senior Conservatives who were less certain about the Anglo-American relationship, it was difficult to challenge Churchill and the party leadership. The Prime Minister’s achievements during the Second World War ensured that his position was secure even as his health deteriorated. Even Eden — the Foreign Secretary whose view of the Anglo-American relationship was based more on *realpolitik*

¹⁹ Minutes of the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee, 14 February 1955, CRD 2/34/1, CPA.

²⁰ Minutes of the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee, 30 November 1955, CRD 2/34/1, CPA. See also 7 December 1955, CRD 2/34/1, CPA. In 1956 after Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was critical of British colonialism in a press conference, Prime Minister Anthony Eden and his press secretary William Clark ‘agreed to say nothing publicly, though I spoke to *The Times* which wrote a strong leader, and the PM wrote a piece into his speech which I now will come out before he gives it.’ William Clark, *From Three Worlds*, 194.

²¹ Anthony Eden, *Full Circle* (London: Cassell, 1960), 481.

²² David Dutton, *Anthony Eden: A Life and Reputation* (London: Arnold, 1997), 329 and 353-4.

²³ Peter Catterall (ed), 12 May 1953, *The Macmillan Diaries: The Cabinet Years 1950-1957* (London: Macmillan 2007), 231. Emphasis in Original.

than Churchill's romantic conception of the alliance — could offer little serious opposition. As well as having acquiesced during the wartime coalition, Eden continued to suppress any doubts as the 'special relationship' was established in the late 1940s. Secretary of State for India and Burma during the Second World War, Leo Amery revealed the frustrations which were common amongst Conservative politicians constrained by collective responsibility. He privately wrote 'I only wish sometimes I were in a free position to say what I think about the Atlantic Charter and all the other tripe which is being talked now, exactly like the tripe talked to please President Wilson.'²⁴ Freed from the conventions of holding office, many conservatives were subsequently more outspoken about their objections to US policy. In his memoirs written in 1962, Colonial Secretary Oliver Lyttelton remembered that Washington was motivated by 'a pathological hatred of colonialism, reinforced by a profound ignorance of what Great Britain was trying to do, or the very nature of the difficulties.'²⁵

Greeks and Romans

Although American anti-colonialism was problematic for Conservatives in Britain, London's changing role in world affairs elicited various reactions from observers across the political spectrum. As Britons attempted to explain the changing situations of both countries, some were indeed influenced by feelings of jealousy, envy, resentment and bitterness at this transfer of power but these reactions were complicated. Visiting a Seattle fairground in 1952, Labour MP Woodrow Wyatt noted that:

I was shocked by the low regard for Britain. Or is patriotism an extension of one's own vanity? I am me and very special; I am British so Britain must be the best and most important country, influencing all the others. On a large fairground in Seattle, Washington, I looked one night at the stars and wept: this vast country thought my darling England was not worth bothering about, equating her to a poor old aunt of the mainstream.²⁶

²⁴ Wm. Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!* 146.

²⁵ Oliver Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos*, 355.

²⁶ Woodrow Wyatt, *Confessions of an Optimist*, 187.

Such sentiments were not uncommon. Ian Fleming, a novelist and manager of the *Sunday Times*'s foreign coverage, noted on a trip to the American West Coast in 1959 that it 'was a source of constant depression to observe how little of our own influence was left in that great half of the world where we did so much of the pioneering.' Perturbed by Washington's growing presence in Japan and Australia, he observed that 'the Americans and American culture, communications and trade have almost a monopoly of the Pacific.'²⁷ Fleming's James Bond novels reflected his attempts to come to terms with this apparent loss of status *vis-à-vis* Washington. Bond's relationship with CIA operative Felix Leiter was allegorical of the Cold War 'special relationship' and, according to Jeremy Black, was 'a far smoother working of the Anglo-American alliance than was in fact the case.'²⁸ Bond was contemptuous about the inauthentic nature of American culture; he even regarded its gangsters as 'just teenage pillow-fantasies' compared with the 'dedicated, chess-playing Russians; brilliant, neurotic Germans; silent, deadly, anonymous men from Central Europe.'²⁹ Despite the protagonist's occasional scepticism about the US and its culture, Bond and his American counterpart were close enough to co-operate against various foes as the financial might of Washington was utilised to fund the British efforts.

Implicit in such constructions of the relationship was the assumption that Britons had superior experience and diplomatic skills than their American counterparts yet they needed the US's economic backing for support. This was a common interpretation which was applied in a wide range of debates about the relationship and intersected with the common British belief in the stereotype that Americans were naive or innocent in foreign policy. Even more provocative than the Bond novels was Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, a critique of American foreign policy in Indo-China which was accused of being anti-American by reviewers in the US. A *Newsweek* headline described 'This Man's Caricature of the American Abroad' and complained about the novelists

²⁷ Ian Fleming, *Thrilling Cities* (London: Vintage, 2013 [1962]), 145

²⁸ Jeremy Black, *The Politics of James Bond: From Fleming's Novels to the Big Screen* (Westport: Praeger, 2001), 7.

²⁹ Ian Fleming, *Diamonds are Forever* (London: Penguin, 2004 [1956]), 97.

‘dreary stereotyping of his American characters.’³⁰ Set during the first war in Indo-China, central to Greene’s novel were English journalist Thomas Fowler’s encounters with Americans reporting on the region or providing aid for the area. The US characters were based on longstanding British stereotypes of their ally; the journalist Grainger is arrogant and brash whilst Fowler regards the eponymous ‘quiet American’ Alden Pyle as idealistic and naive in his appraisals of foreign affairs. Although the novel’s title attracted attention and allegations of anti-Americanism, the British character Fowler was hardly heroic or a positive portrayal of the English abroad given his cynicism, duplicity and jealousy of Pyle. As Greene’s biographer noted, this was ‘tame’ compared with the French criticisms of the US role in Indo-China but given his other views about America the novelist was by no means fond of the country and was particularly critical of its government.³¹ In 1967, he wrote that ‘If I had to choose between life in the Soviet Union and life in the United States I would certainly choose the Soviet Union.’³²

Despite the growing power asymmetry within the alliance and Washington’s enhanced international position it was rare that Britons concluded that they no longer exercised an important world role. It was believed that diplomatic and other skills acquired over time would compensate for material shortcomings and relative loss of hard power. Future Prime Minister Harold Macmillan’s wartime claim that British officials could be the ‘Greeks in this American empire’ continued to be espoused in the 1950s in various forms.³³ Attlee claimed in 1954 that ‘Americans think in black and white where we see shades of grey.’³⁴ After all, there was some justification for this belief and despite any ostensible decline Britain remained a significant actor on the world stage. It was the only country besides the US and USSR to have exploded atomic and hydrogen weapons and had been a major contributor to anti-communist interventions in the Far East and Middle East.

³⁰ Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene, Volume II: 1939-1955* (London: Penguin, 1996 [1994]), 472-3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 478.

³² Quoted in Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, *Hating America*, 130.

³³ Alistair Horne, *Macmillan 1894-1956* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 160.

³⁴ Clement Attlee, ‘Britain and America: Common Aims, Different Opinions’, *Foreign Affairs*, 32, 2 (1954), 200.

Notions of Anglo-America or the similar heritage, language and political values between the US and Britain also affected appraisals of the UK's post-war world role and position *vis-à-vis* Washington. One aspect of the belief in Anglo-America or a liberal Anglosphere was the idea that both countries' common values meant that US foreign policy continued Britain's aims and objectives. This was widely invoked by the burgeoning ranks of Americanists in British academia as the post-war period witnessed the growth of this discipline encouraged by the State Department and Whitehall.³⁵ Particularly in universities, the topic was accorded more attention with the onset of the Cold War and close Anglo-American alliance with departments focusing on the subject founded at several universities. Writer Stephen Potter pointed out in 1956 that '[k]nowledge of the history of the United States, most rewarding of subjects, is the intelligent Englishman's biggest gap.'³⁶ This was less true amongst the academic community by the end of the period and the British Association for American Studies (BAAS) was created in 1953 to provide a forum for these scholars. Nonetheless, gaps remained in the provision for American history, geography and literature in the British education system. A study conducted in 1955 revealed that only 14 percent of secondary schools offered any substantive study of the US and as few as 5 percent of O Level history students sat exam papers in the subject.³⁷ However, proponents of American studies were often met with reluctance, indifference or suspicion as they sought to broaden the curriculum. When a survey in the early 1960s asked if it taught US subjects, a Welsh school replied 'Why should we? This is a British school.'³⁸ According to writer and academic Martin Green, this meant that the academic interest in American affairs was 'neither intelligent nor wholehearted' because it 'either remains academic or concentrates on the

³⁵ David Reynolds, 'Whitehall, Washington and the Promotion of American Studies in Britain during World War Two', *Journal of American Studies*, 16, 2 (1982), 165-88.

³⁶ Stephen Potter, *Potter on America* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956), 143.

³⁷ H. C. Allen, *American History in Britain: An Inaugural Lecture delivered at University College London*, 27 October 1955 (London: H. K. Lewis, 1956), 5-6.

³⁸ Jim Potter, 'The Study of the U.S.A. in British Schools 1963-64: A Report Prepared under the Sponsorship of the British Association of American Studies', page 5, Box 28, British Association of American Studies Papers, University of Birmingham (hereafter BAAS).

exotic' and 'does not take America seriously as our successor, our collaborator, in reinterpreting, recreating, creating the Western mind.'³⁹

In fact, his judgement about the links between the two countries was widely invoked by the growing ranks of British Americanists who tended to echo Churchillian arguments about the alliance. According to Richard Pells, this group 'tended to think of themselves as rebels, outsiders, people from the proverbial provinces, having only the most tenuous connections to the British economic and professorial establishment.'⁴⁰ This might have been the case but, with few radicals or socialists amongst their ranks, they rarely challenged the wisdom of the Anglo-American relationship and often communicated these ideas to the wider public through regular press assignments. Indeed, numerous historical accounts portrayed the nineteenth century development of the relationship as a 'ripening of friendship' as the countries overcame the tension which culminated in American Independence. The scarcity of dollars and logistical problems in crossing the Atlantic meant that there were limited opportunities for specialists in US affairs to make trips to US archives and as a result their writing tended to have a transatlantic focus. For BAAS Chairman Frank Thistlethwaite, the US 'developed, not in truth in isolation, but as an integral part of the Atlantic basin.' Furthermore, he outlined that 'American culture grew to maturity within an Atlantic world with nerve-centres in Chelsea and Manchester, as well as in Boston and Philadelphia.'⁴¹ Observing the views of this group in the 1980s, British American historian Michael Heale argued that this was a 'liberal moment' for his predecessors, who looked across the Atlantic with enthusiasm and confidence that the US had positive lessons to offer Europe.⁴² The contemporary challenges in world affairs were regarded as having similarities with examples from American history. H. G. Nicholas's study *The American Union* concluded that:

³⁹ Martin Green, *A Mirror for Anglo-Saxons* (London: Longmans, 1961), 151-2.

⁴⁰ Richard Pells, *Not Like Us*, 116.

⁴¹ Frank Thistlethwaite, *The Great Experiment*, x-xi

⁴² Michael J. Heale, 'Writing in Great Britain on United States History, 1945-1980: Some Reflections on a Liberal Moment', in Lewis Hanke (ed), *Guide to the Study of United States History Outside the U.S. 1945-1980, Volume II* (New York: American Historical Association, 1985), 375.

There was nothing that Lincoln had to say of the struggle in 1862 which was not even more truly applicable to the struggle of 1946, save that now it was not the American Union merely, it was world civilization which was at stake. Looking back on their history, all could see the answer they had given then; looking forward, they could resolve not to shirk the answer now.⁴³

According to this view, Britain's post-war decline was eased due to the special relationship,' because its policy-makers shared a world view and values with their American counterparts. On the BBC Third Programme in 1957, Keith Kyle, who began an academic career in the 1960s after a period working for the Corporation's North American Department, labelled the US as the 'Guardian of British Tradition.' He told listeners that its political system bore similarities with those of eighteenth century Britain, claiming that 'the more bewildering and irritating features of American politics [...] would be far less mysterious to most Englishmen if they knew rather more about their own political history.'⁴⁴ Even the right-wing critics of the Anglo-American relationship utilised such rhetoric despite their opposition to US foreign policy. The *Daily Express* often editorialised to such effect, noting during Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation that the American tourists' attitudes towards the new monarch was 'more like that of loyal and devoted subjects than of inquisitive tourists out to see a show.' This was a sign, it asserted, of the 'common heritage, in the soil and traditions of Britain, which will withstand any malicious efforts which may be made to split Britons and Americans asunder.'⁴⁵ Leo Amery, a prominent critic of the effects of the 'special relationship' on British links with the Empire, offered a more extended disquisition on the subject in a 1949 speech to the English-Speaking Union. Entitled 'The English-Thinking World,' Amery outlined the common outlook of the two countries and cited Abraham Lincoln alongside John Milton and Edmund Burke in his discussion of this outlook which was 'essentially moral, in the sense at least that it tends habitually to form moral

⁴³ H. G. Nicholas, *The American Union: A Short History of the U.S.A.* (London: Christophers, 1948), 303.

⁴⁴ Keith Kyle, 'America: The Guardian of British Tradition', BBC Third Programme, T273, Radio Scripts Library, WAC.

⁴⁵ 'Welcome Visitors', *Daily Express*, 25 May 1953, 4.

judgements.’ The American Revolution was regarded as a ‘continuation of the English Civil War’ and US resentment of the Commonwealth was the product of the fact that its elite and public ‘continued to think of the British Empire in terms of the British Government of the eighteenth century.’ Ultimately, Amery encouraged greater understanding as a way of resolving any tension as he urged Britons to:

learn to understand the nature of the American constitutional system and be interested in its working, and that Americans should understand and be interested in the development and working of the Commonwealth, both for its own sake as the newest experiment in the building up of human ordered freedom, and also as an essential partner in helping to preserve freedom in the world against the dangers which threaten it.⁴⁶

Remembering Co-operation

The tensions between Britain’s imperial and Atlantic loyalties were apparent in the memories of the Second World War. In 1953 William Buchanan and Hadley Cantril argued that the Second World War served as a ‘frame of reference’ for governing views of other nationalities in the post-war period as both allied and axis countries tended to sympathise more with their former allies whilst remaining hostile towards their wartime enemies.⁴⁷ However, the fact that they had co-operated to defeat Nazi Germany did not prevent the belief in Britain that the US had acquired its post-war international position as a result of the conflict. The differing recollections of wartime were evident in M-O’s surveys of the British public in the early stages of the Korean War as many respondents to News Quotas or Directives pointed to the most recent conflict in order to explain the evolving international crisis in the Far East. A 49 year-old housewife articulated an interpretation of the wartime co-operation informed by the belief that the two countries’ interests and aims overlapped:

⁴⁶ Leo Amery, ‘The English-Thinking World’, November 1949, AMEL/142, CCC. Even a pamphlet published in 1955 by a group of left-wing Labour activists noted that Britain could influence the US because ‘We speak the same language’ and ‘to a great extent we share a common culture and tradition.’ Olive Bentley, Hugh Jenkins and Walter Wolfgang, *In Pursuit of Peace*, (London: Victory for Socialism, 1955), 11.

⁴⁷ William Buchanan and Hadley Cantril, *How Nations see Each Other: A Study in Public Opinion*, 41.

During the war, I felt that in spite of Lease-Lend etc, the Americans owed us a debt of gratitude for the stand we made for freedom. Now they are taking the lead against aggression, which with their vast resources + less depleted reserves than ours, they are well able to do.⁴⁸

Not all respondents were as positive about the wartime experience or believed in the shared goals of the two countries. Fatigue for air raids and conscription was often reported by Londoners and, though there was a desire that Britain exercise the role of a Great Power, there was ambivalence which likely continued with anti-communist interventions in Malaya and Kenya during the 1950s. A 53 year-old housewife reported her mixed feelings about the effects of US policy and the wartime relationship:

They are supplying us with considerable financial aid and yet I find that I have no feelings of gratitude. Much of their wealth and our poverty is due to their non-participation in the early years of the war.⁴⁹

A 19 year-old female shorthand typist described that she was ‘definitely anti-American’ because the Americans ‘get rich on wars.’⁵⁰ Such views were also apparent amongst the critics of Britain’s Atlanticist foreign policy. Harold Wilson, a left-wing Labour MP who was amongst the chief sceptics about the Anglo-American relationship, argued, ‘basic economic fact about the war is that whereas Britain and many other countries came out of it a great deal poorer, some nations, and in particular, the United States, came out of it much richer.’⁵¹ For the Conservative critics of the ‘special relationship,’ their experiences fighting alongside American soldiers in conflict informed the criticism of the alliance. Having served as a Brigadier in North Africa, Enoch Powell, a backbench MP who was linked with the Suez Group, described his American

⁴⁸ DR 1850, reply to August 1950 directive, MOA.

⁴⁹ DR 4049, reply to August 1950 directive, MOA.

⁵⁰ F, 19, C, Shorthand Typist, TC9/2/C, MOA.

⁵¹ Harold Wilson, *In Place of Dollars*, 4.

allies as 'gauche and amateurish' and the experience informed his view that Washington was intent on supplanting the British Empire in the Middle East.⁵²

Particularly revealing of the different interpretations of the Anglo-American relationship were the war films that dominated cinema listings throughout the period. According to one study, 85 films were produced on the subject in the fifteen years after the war with most well-known directors, producers and actors involved at some point in a combat film.⁵³ Though ostensibly divorced from the political process, the productions are significant for ascertaining attitudes towards the US because of their popularity. *The Dam Busters*, *The Bridge over the River Kwai* and *The Red Beret* were amongst the most successful films of the era and the 1948 Anglo-American Film Agreement led to a surfeit of Hollywood actors appearing alongside Britons. Because cinema often reached more people weekly than even the press, it is a useful indicator of underlying assumptions of the film makers and the ideological context in which they worked. Furthermore, the growth in the number of Second World War films was often attributed to the context that was Britain's changing international role. *New Statesman* film critic William Whitebait linked the genre's appeal with British 'decline' as he noted that 'H-bomb looms ahead, and we daren't look at it; so we creep back to the lacerating comfort of 'last time'.'⁵⁴ According to Richard Todd, who starred in the popular 1955 film *The Dam Busters*, the war film genre was motivated by the same nostalgia as that which inspired Hollywood westerns.⁵⁵ The Anglo-American relationship was often central and the Americanism of the central characters emphasised as they had names such as "Texas" Norton or "Yank" Flanagan. As such, these were revealing about memories of the wartime relationship and the respective roles the two countries were believed to play in the post-war world.

⁵² Simon Heffer, *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell* (London: Phoenix, 1998), 122-123

⁵³ Nicholas Pronay, 'The British Post-bellum Cinema: a survey of the films relating to World War II made in Britain between 1945 and 1960', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 8, 1 (1988), 39-54.

⁵⁴ William Whitebait, 'Bombardment', *New Statesman*, 5 April 1958, 432.

⁵⁵ Brian McFarlane, *An Autobiography of British Cinema* (London: Methuen, 1997), 564. This point was also made in Raymond Durnat, *A Mirror for England: British Movies from Austerity to Affluence* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970), 83.

Few of these war films offered an assessment of the Anglo-American relationship which critiqued the Atlanticism that dominated British politics. Indeed, they often presented co-operation between the two countries as central to the military triumphs with any clichéd differences in language and culture or, more importantly, strategy, eventually being overcome. Released in cinemas months before the onset of war in Korea as Cold War tension escalated, *They Were Not Divided* (1950) portrayed the importance of Anglo-American co-operation to the allied victories. It focused on the comradeship within the Welsh Guards — with particular emphasis on the friendship of Englishman Philip Hamilton and American David Morgan — before the invasion of Europe in 1944. References to the importance of British and American solidarity were evident throughout if somewhat contrived; Morgan married an English woman and told her that the two countries ‘think the same things.’ When they die together on the battlefield at the film’s conclusion, their graves were indistinguishable and marked with a British and American flag that tilted towards one another. *They Were Not Divided* was unsuccessful at the Box Office and caused some sensitivity amongst reviewers who perceived that the American role was exaggerated. Shortly before its release, which came at a time when US actors were beginning to feature more frequently in nominally British films, *Daily Express* film critic Leonard Mosley reported receiving negative correspondence from viewers who believed the American role was inflated. Though he stressed the importance of the US contribution, Mosley confessed that ‘my blood begins to steam and my heart is full of hate when I see Errol Flynn, or some other Hollywood actor, leading a charge of the Sunset Boulevard Fusiliers and winning the war in Burma all on his own.’⁵⁶ Such complaints were a constant refrain throughout the period. Whitebait described *The Cockleshell Heroes* (1955) as ‘one of those mysterious Anglo-American war films in which everything is supposed to look authentic while a Major of Marines has an American accent’ and US actor Alan Ladd’s role as a

⁵⁶ Leonard Mosley, ‘So don’t go all indignant over this ...’ *Daily Express*, 3 March 1950, 6. Mosley’s subsequent review of the film was largely favourable Leonard Mosley, ‘War ... with an amiable gleam in the eye.’ *Daily Express*, 31 March 1950, 6.

paratrooper in *The Red Beret* (1953) prompted protests from branches of the Parachute Regimental Association.⁵⁷

Despite these questions about whether the American role was inflated, there was little reflection on the fact that the Soviet role and the war in Europe were omitted from productions. On-screen criticisms of the US were tame and even the persistent complaints that Washington had entered the war late could be offset by the inclusion of American soldiers who had joined the British Army before Pearl Harbour. One such instance of this was *Gift Horse* (1952), which focused on the St. Nazaire Raid of 1942. “Yank” Flanagan was seamlessly incorporated into the majority British operation, even marrying an English woman from the local port. As well as showing co-operation between the two nationalities, it depicted an incident which was contentious in discussion of the Anglo-American relationship. The fictional HMS Ballantrae had been transferred to the British Navy from the US in exchange for the leasing of various colonial territories under the 1940 Destroyers for Bases Deal, an agreement that attracted some criticism from conservatives. Eden reflected right-wing doubts about the arrangement when he wrote in his diary:

Incidentally, do we want to see US bases established, say, at Auckland and in Fiji, at Takoradi and Trincomalee? Some of these areas are a far cry for US, others are not, and I would not happily contemplate a whole-sale extension of US bases throughout the British Commonwealth.⁵⁸

As the title of the film suggested, *Gift Horse* portrayed the agreement more as an opportunity that could not be missed than a sign of American efforts to dismantle the British Empire, something which prompted at least one complaint in the right-wing press.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ William Whitebait, ‘An Italian Strong Man’, *New Statesman*, 26 November 1955, 705; ‘Why Pick Ladd? Ask Paratroopers’, *Daily Mail*, 22 September 1952, 3.

⁵⁸ David Dutton, *Anthony Eden: A Life and Reputation*, 148.

⁵⁹ *Daily Mail* reviewer Fred Madjalany resented the Hollywood presence ‘in a British film giving what purports to be a description of an actual naval exploit.’ ‘New Films in London’, *Daily Mail*, 21 July 1952, 6. One correspondent criticised the reviewer for exaggerating US generosity, stating that exaggerated American generosity, wrote to the newspaper stressing that ‘We seem to recall the small question of 99-year leases of certain British bases having been involved.’ W. Chilton, Letter to the *Daily Mail*, 21 July 1952, 2.

When overt disagreements between British and American soldiers were portrayed, these were usually resolved during the course of the film. In *Count Five and Die* (1957) and *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), the Anglo-American co-operation succeeded in spite of the initial tension caused when more junior US characters took charge of their British superiors. In *The Red Beret* (1953) and *Seagulls over Sorrento* (1954), the initial tension between the allies is overcome as they experience wartime co-operation. These themes were evident in successful productions and Box Office flops alike. *Saturday Island* (1951) received poor reviews but the adaptation of a Hugh Brooke novel from 1935 reflected the widespread debates about the two countries' changing roles. The film portrayed the relationship between Michael Dougan, a young and inexperienced US marine and Lieutenant Elizabeth Smythe, a higher ranking, more mature and middle-class Canadian nurse, after they became stranded on a desert island during wartime. Smythe is initially unimpressed by the American who was sought-after amongst the women crew on the ship destined for Canada. When Dougan finds some money on the island, she tells him he can 'buy himself a yo-yo' and, when he claims the island in the name of the United States, Smythe replies that it 'undoubtedly belongs to England.' Overcoming their initial differences and awkwardness of their situation, they develop a close relationship but Dougan's declaration of love is interrupted by the crash-landing of English pilot William Peck. Despite the American's jealousy of the older Peck's more instant rapport with Smythe, when the trio are rescued Dougan confesses that he was 'born too late and has got a lot to learn' and concedes both the island and the Canadian woman to his English rival.

Despite the frequency with which Anglo-American co-operation was in portrayed British war films, there was sensitivity in both countries about the depictions of the relative roles of both countries during wartime. Being productions that usually celebrated British heroism and comradeship, there was some annoyance that the US's role seemed to have been inflated. In the *Dam Busters* (1955), the inclusion of the 'Coney Island beach-guard' Joe McCarthy was a token reference to the broader national basis of the operation and defeat of Nazi Germany. As one recent commentator has noted, this was 'to be 'part of

our Empire's story' rather than a celebration of the diversity of the United Kingdom or of the Atlantic Alliance.'⁶⁰ Macmillan's aphorism about 'Greeks and Romans' was often apparent in the representation of the wartime Anglo-American relationship. This was especially true in prisoner of war films, a popular sub-genre in the 1950s portrayals of wartime co-operation. In these portrayals, a single American character was usually presented as an outsider compared with the other inmates who were mostly British. As the inmates devised escape plans, national differences were important in shaping their contrasting approaches. In *Albert R. N.* (1953), Lieutenant "Texas" Norton's (William Sylvester) impatience with the long-winded schemes of the British officers result in him devising a unilateral plan to bribe the guards with an expensive watch which result in him being shot dead whilst trying to escape. This American impulsiveness became a trope in these films; US characters attempted solo bids for freedom with varying results in *The Bridge over the River Kwai* (1957), *The Camp on Blood Island* (1957) and *No Time to Die!* (1958). Such constructions of the contrasting Anglo-American approaches to wartime were epitomised by the Anglo-American produced *The Great Escape* (1963) about which as one recent observer has noted 'Anglo-American tensions [...] provided the unspoken context to the development of the genre and intruded into the action.'⁶¹ Although the American role in the escape from Stalag Luft III was exaggerated to appeal to US audiences, their presence was central to the plot as Fourth of July celebrations and baseball reminded audiences of the co-operation between the two countries. The US Captain Virgil Hiltz (Steve McQueen) was notorious for having made eighteen previous escape attempts and proceeded to devise unilateral schemes which differed from the elaborate British plans. Thus, British Second World War films ultimately offered a variety of portrayals about the Anglo-American relationship (sometimes simultaneously) which applied as much to the post-war collaboration as memories of the recent conflict. Despite the latent resentment about the US's late entry into the conflict and sensitivity that British

⁶⁰ John Ramsden, *The Dam Busters: A British Film Guide* (London: IB Tauris, 2002), 67

⁶¹ Nicholas J. Cull, "'Great Escapes': 'Englishness' and the Prisoner of War Genre", *Film History*, 14, 3-4 (2002), 293.

achievements not be overlooked or minimised, there was little overt hostility towards the US. This was partly the result of the financial arrangements of British cinema in the 1950s but it complemented the Atlanticism that was popular in the formal political debate.

International Economy

The United States' growing international economic role was also the cause of some tension with Britons. Washington's efforts to exploit overseas markets and promote multilateralism brought it into occasional conflict with Britain when the two countries' interests diverged. Not only did the Commonwealth continue to be the main area for British exports and imports, it was widely held that any recent reduction in imperial trade was temporary and that trade with these countries could be vital in the UK's economic recovery. In 1950, the Conservative manifesto pledged to tackle the economic problems 'not only by reviving [Britain's] native strength but by fortifying every link with the nations of our Empire and Commonwealth.'⁶² Little had changed by 1955 after the party's first term in office and that year's manifesto similarly argued that the imperial partnerships had 'enabled us to stave off the economic perils that faced the whole Sterling area at the time the Conservative Government took over.'⁶³ It was not only right-wing spokesmen who held this view as politicians in the Attlee Cabinet had routinely spoken to this effect whilst in office and such ideas persisted on the left until the 1960s.⁶⁴ A pre-election statement by Labour leader Harold Wilson in 1964 was typical as it rejected the idea 'that decline in the relative importance of Commonwealth trade is inevitable' but regarded this as 'due to Government policy and a failure on the part of our exporters to grasp their opportunities in Commonwealth markets.'⁶⁵ These economic ties were also regarded as a source of British strength and independence which seemed to

⁶² '1950 Manifesto: This is the Road', in Iain Dale (ed), *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos 1900-1997*, 77.

⁶³ '1955 Manifesto: United for Peace and Progress', *Ibid.*, 109.

⁶⁴ John Callaghan, 'In Search of Eldorado: Labour's Colonial Economic Policy', in Jim Fyfe (ed), *Labour's Promised Land?* 115-34.

⁶⁵ Harold Wilson, *The Relevance of British Socialism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 62. Wilson had articulated a similar case about the need to avoid economic dependence on the US through Commonwealth expansion in his 1953 pamphlet *In Place of Dollars*.

be undermined by aspects of the Anglo-American relationship. Although aid from the US was welcomed in the late 1940s, the termination of Marshall Aid in 1950 was celebrated as marking an increase in British autonomy. A front-page headline in the *Daily Mirror* announced that 'Britain is on her own feet again' and the *Daily Express* proclaimed that the country was once again 'an erect and independent nation.'⁶⁶ Being independent economically was linked with Britain's capacity to play a vital role in world affairs. At the Conservative Party's 1952 conference, Eden stressed that the country 'must not expect the status of partner unless we can stand on our own feet and that Britain 'must be economically independent in order to ensure that our voice may carry its weight in the world.'⁶⁷

This economic attachment to the Empire was often a source of tension with Washington. The support for the complicated system of preferences on which imperial trading was based contrasted with American officials' calls for free trade and exacerbated the scepticism about the Anglo-American Loan deal of 1946 which one senior figure described as marking the abandonment of 'Victorian prudence.'⁶⁸ At Conservative Party conferences in 1952 and 1953, anti-GATT and pro-Commonwealth resolutions were moved, with ministers responding that the organisation needed amendment. In 1954, the party's leadership's position was challenged as Leo Amery, a prominent supporter of Imperial Preference, called for Britain's withdrawal and backbench MP Victor Raikes warned that currency convertibility could mean that 'the markets of much of our Empire would be swept and flooded by foreign goods.'⁶⁹ Answering these concerns, Chairman of the Board of Trade Peter Thorneycroft received the support of delegates when he stressed the importance of imperial

⁶⁶ Bill Grieg, 'Britain is on her own feet again', *Daily Mirror*, 14 December 1950, 1; 'Independence at Last', *Daily Express*, 14 December 1950, 4. A correspondent in the *British Manufacturer* blamed US trade policies for the need for Marshall Aid, claiming that it was 'brought about very largely by the high tariffs and one-way trade which America had imposed upon the world for the past thirty years.' Wilfred Hall, 'The Shortcomings of Marshall Aid', *The British Manufacturer*, August 1950, 16-8

⁶⁷ 72nd Annual Conference of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations 1952, 36. Labour's 1953 pamphlet *Challenge to Britain* argued that securing economic independence was 'one of Labour's major objectives.' *Challenge to Britain* (London: Labour Party, 1953), 3.

⁶⁸ Earl Woolton, *The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon the Earl of Woolton* (London: Cassell, 1959), 372.

⁶⁹ 74th Annual Conference of Conservative and Unionist Associations, 54.

trade but stressed that Britain needed to remain in GATT and work for its amendment. Thereafter, as one recent account has noted, GATT was ‘a dead issue in practical policy terms.’⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the subject remained a cause of the grievances with figures aligned with the Suez Group and, though it might have ceased to have an effect on policy debates, there were signs of resentment towards the US. In a 1957 book revealingly entitled *The Uncertain Ally*, John Biggs-Davison developed this case when he argued that:

Much well-meant, naïve or unconstructive criticism was levelled from America at the Colonial Powers. This assisted the entry of American interests into new fields of exploitation, furthered and incited the open and clandestine competition of Moscow for the allegiance of the new nationalities of Asia and increased the dependence of the British and European Empires upon American patronage.⁷¹

The inconsistency of Washington’s calls for multilateralism added to the Conservative complaints about the US’s international economic policies. Despite its calls for ‘free trade,’ the American administration often introduced legislation to prevent imports and the 1933 Buy American Act ensured that the federal government preferred to offer contracts to domestic businesses. Even Chancellor R. A. Butler remembered imploring US officials ‘to live up to the slogan which they had been dinning into me ever since I arrived at the Treasury, namely non-discrimination.’⁷² This alleged hypocrisy of American policy-makers was a frequent theme of *Daily Express* editorials but its criticism was aimed as much at the Conservative Government as the elites across the Atlantic. After the US protected its bicycle industry against British exports in 1952, it editorialised ‘No blame then to the Americans if they decide to use this weapon. But blame, blame in plenty for the British Government which fails to use the same weapon, and the weapon of preference, to protect its own and the

⁷⁰ Nick Tiratsoo and Jim Tomlinson, *The Conservatives and Industrial Efficiency: Thirteen Wasted Years?* (London: Routledge, 1998), 105

⁷¹ John Biggs-Davison, *The Uncertain Ally* (London: Christopher Johnson, 1957), 114-115.

⁷² Lord Butler, *The Art of the Possible: The Memoirs of Lord Butler* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971), 166. Another former Cabinet Minister Douglas Dodds-Parker later remembered the ‘chauvinists’ in Washington who were ‘determined to take best opportunity of post-war openings for the sale of products’ which resulted in their attempts to penetrate the British Empire. Douglas Dodds-Parker, *Political Eunuch* (Berkshire: Springwood, 1986), 34

Empire's vast markets.⁷³ This was connected with the belief that the Commonwealth could be developed in order to overcome the need for dependence on American markets. In 1953, Julian Amery argued that Britons should not complain about US policies but 'should embark on the intensive development of our resources, and accept that this will call for short-term sacrifice of present living standards.' Rather than making policy with reference to Washington, he argued that 'we should make up our minds what it is we want to do, offer the Americans a chance to come in with us if they so wish, but if necessary be prepared to go it alone.'⁷⁴

Business organisations linked with the Conservative Party responded to American trade and economic policies in a variety of ways. Although many echoed these criticisms of Washington's positions, there were also concerted efforts by entrepreneurs and manufacturers to penetrate American markets which continued in spite of US policies.⁷⁵ Much to the chagrin of those who remained confident in the Empire's economic potential, Chancellor Butler coined the slogan 'Trade, not Aid' and encouraged businesses to remedy Britain's Dollar deficit by trading in the US.⁷⁶ When British tender for US electrical contracts was rejected in December 1952, the *Daily Mail* told readers that 'Empire development is our last reserve—and it can put us right on top again.'⁷⁷ Nonetheless, there were concerted efforts to promote British goods in the US as British trade centres were established in American cities and the Dollar Exports Board was formed in 1949 to provide information and advice for exporters. Its Chairman Sir Cecil Weir remembered that its main priority was 'the restoration of our financial and economic independence' and the British businesses who traded in America were often positive about their experiences.⁷⁸ In the same way that their counterparts in the labour movement tended to report favourably on US industrial relations, business groups relayed often

⁷³ 'Boom in Bicycles', *Daily Express*, 12 January 1952, 4.

⁷⁴ Julian Amery, 'The American Choice', 146.

⁷⁵ Of the enquiries received by the Federation of British Industries about international trade policy in 1951, the largest number was about American tariffs. *FBI Report 1951*, 34.

⁷⁶ For more on Butler's trade policies see Alan P. Dobson, *The Politics of the Anglo-American Economic Special Relationship* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf, 1988), 147-50.

⁷⁷ 'We can win if we try', *Daily Mail*, 10 December 1952, 1.

⁷⁸ Sir Cecil Weir, *Civilian Assignment* (London: Methuen, 1953), 150-1.

enthusiastic advice and guidance for companies seeking to export their products. Car manufacturer Sir William Rootes remembered that it was tantamount to a 'finishing school' and 'the incredible North American friendship and North American goodwill.' Ultimately, Rootes believed that the 'experience taught me a great deal. It gave me a respect for what I call the American "snap" while at the same time it made me aware of my own faults.'⁷⁹

Another element of the economic relationship with the US that caused anxiety was the extent of American investment in Britain. In spite of the eagerness of certain businesses to exploit the opportunity to penetrate US markets, there was some reticence about the prospect of American multilateral organisations operating in Britain. This was particularly true on the sections of the left which, motivated by anti-capitalist impulses, feared the domination of the British economy by foreign businesses. According to Francis Williams, who had served as Clement Attlee's Press Secretary in Downing Street from 1945-7, the post-war growth of American big business in Britain was partly responsible for its Americanisation, a fear which is addressed more closely in Chapter Five. Noting that 800 companies were controlled by US firms and that one twentieth of production came from American-owned plants, he argued that these investors were 'seeking to export to Britain [...] not just money but American civilizations and an American way of life.'⁸⁰ Though Williams' thesis was crude, overlooking any reciprocal British influence over the US, similar warnings were often espoused on the left. For opponents of the close Anglo-American relationship, this apparent influx of US business was another sign of Britain's servile role in relation to Washington as it could prevent a Labour Government from nationalising Britain's industry.⁸¹ Opposition to this process culminated during the bid in November 1960 by the Ford Motor Company to gain 100 per cent control of its British subsidiary. Led by Shadow Chancellor Harold Wilson, Labour MPs in the House of Commons criticised the Conservative Government's support of the decision. This was prompted by

⁷⁹ Dollars Exports Board, *Dollars and Industry: A record of the Dollar Convention held at Eastbourne in March 1951* (London: Dollars Export Board, 1951), 78.

⁸⁰ Francis Williams, *The American Invasion* (New York: Crown, 1962), 29.

⁸¹ Bob Edwards, *America: Ally or Master?* (London: Union for Democratic Control, 1962), 5-6.

concerns that American Ford could divert business away from its subsidiary as well as fears that a recession across the Atlantic could harm the British economy, or that decisions about production would be made from Detroit. John Parker, the Labour MP whose constituency included the Ford plant at Dagenham, warned that:

If the American Ford Company misuses the position which it will acquire as a result of this take-over bid to the detriment of Dagenham in regard to employment, there will a Boston Tea Party in Dagenham and we shall throw the American interests into the Thames. We shall free Dagenham from colonial rule.⁸²

Labour's opposition to the takeover prompted renewed charges amongst Conservatives that the left was motivated by 'anti-American venom,' or, as the *Spectator* put it, 'auto-anti-Americanism.'⁸³ The *Economist* linked the left-wing opposition with the growing evidence that Britain was 'a second class power,' a change in Britain's status that encouraged 'suspicion, envy and prejudice that drive a less than great power into recurrent, if half-hearted, xenophobia'⁸⁴ The Ford incident proved to be another demonstration that Labour was usually forced to defend its credentials about the Anglo-American relationship and counter charges about its anti-Americanism. Wilson was right to stress that it was the extent of American involvement rather than indiscriminate opposition that motivated the protests and pointed out that the Labour Government made similar deals for foreign investment – a distinction lost in the heat of debate.⁸⁵ Conservatives had their own doubts about the decision – even if they were less forcefully expressed. The *Daily Express* reported deep concern amongst some Tory MPs and right-wing objections focused on the sale price of the remaining shares purchased by American Ford and the possibility that British managerial talent could be overlooked as US staff was brought to the UK.⁸⁶ As much as the right-wing press attempted to smear the left with charges of anti-Americanism,

⁸² John Parker, HC Deb, 21 November 1960, Volume 630, Column 859.

⁸³ Martin Lindsay, HC Deb, 21 November 1960, Volume 630, Column 842; 'Auto-anti-Americanism', *Spectator*, 25 November 1960, 801-2.

⁸⁴ 'Not so Great Power', *Economist*, 26 November 1960, 857.

⁸⁵ Harold Wilson, HC Deb, 21 November 1960 Volume 630, Column 839-40.

⁸⁶ 'Ford: Three Big Fears', *Daily Express*, 16 November 1960, 1; William Rees-Mogg, 'What is Ford Worth?', *Sunday Times*, 20 November 1960, 7.

the US takeover of British assets in Persia in 1951 and Trinidad in 1956 was also criticised by Conservatives. When the Eden Government agreed to sell British oil assets in Trinidad to Texas-based Anglo-American Oil Company, the decision provoked criticism from an unlikely alliance of the communist *Daily Worker*, Labour supporting *Daily Herald* and the Beaverbrook *Daily Express*. The latter editorialised that it 'is wrong for a foreign Power to entrench itself either in Britain or in the Empire. And that applies even to Britain's ally.'⁸⁷ Nonetheless, this was another occasion during which the Conservative Party ensured the acquiescence of its MPs as the dissent reported in the 1922 Committee failed to materialise when it came to a Parliamentary vote on the subject.

Left-wing complaints about Washington's economic policy focused on its hoarding of raw materials or the restrictions it placed on British trade with countries behind the Iron Curtain. Passed by the American Congress, the Battle Act threatened to deny aid to any country which traded behind the Iron Curtain. For some trade unionists, this appeared to be evidence that Washington was harming the British economy. At the 1953 TUC conference, a delegate from the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers bemoaned the impact of this legislation as he claimed that unemployment in Merseyside was 'a direct result of American interference with our established elementary rights to trade with any other country.'⁸⁸ For Aneurin Bevan, Washington's restriction of trade with China 'scarcely touches the buoyant American economy' but 'hinders in a thousand ways the totally different economic needs of Great Britain.' Moreover, Bevan argued the US trade embargoes prevented the industrial expansion which would undermine revolutionary extremism.⁸⁹ This section of British politics believed that the American preference for global free markets and currency convertibility hindered Labour's aspirations for a socialist programme based on import restrictions and bilateral trade. Furthermore, American restrictions on trade with communist states led some to conclude that

⁸⁷ 'Stop it Today!', *Daily Express*, 12 June 1956, 6.

⁸⁸ *TUC Report 1953*, 438.

⁸⁹ Aneurin Bevan, 'Britain and America at Loggerheads', *Foreign Affairs*, 36, 1 (1957), 65.

US policies were hindering Britain's economic recovery.⁹⁰ John Strachey asserted for example 'Convertibility, and the restoration of one united capitalist economy in the Western world today, would in practice mean that we could become the helpless, hopeless, voteless and voiceless satellite of America'.⁹¹ The policy document *Challenge to Britain*, accepted by the 1953 conference, criticised high American tariffs and its hoarding of raw materials, advocating currency controls and discrimination against luxury dollar goods.

Suez and After

Conservative complaints about Washington's attitudes towards the British Empire culminated during the Suez Crisis in November 1956. The diplomatic events leading to the period of tension for the Anglo-American relationship are well-known; Britain and France colluded with the Israeli Government to invade Egypt in order to reclaim the Suez Canal Company which had been nationalised by President Gamal Nasser earlier that year.⁹² When pressure on sterling from Washington forced the abandonment of the operation soon after its launch, the right-wing criticism of the US's policies in the Middle East was momentarily articulated much more widely. Members of the Suez Group were naturally vocal in their criticism of the Eisenhower administration. Angus Maude claimed that 'the ultimate destruction of Western interests in the Middle East — and perhaps the Atlantic Alliance — rests squarely on Mr. Eisenhower, and we admit to the world that we are now an American satellite.'⁹³ Recent events seemed to have proved the longstanding complaints about the US's attempt to undermine the British Empire. Julian Amery was reported as having told a group of French Conservatives that 'Never before has any country been treated by an ally as we have been' and complained that Britain's withdrawal from

⁹⁰ Labour MP Harold Davies claimed in 1953 that 'Britain is facing economic ruin from American-imposed restrictions on East-West trade'. *LPACR* 1953, 92.

⁹¹ John Strachey, 'Soldiers, Dollars and Funk Money', *Tribune*, 5 June 1953.

⁹² For more details about Anglo-American diplomatic disagreement in the Middle East see W. Scott Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the US and the Suez Crisis* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991).

⁹³ Angus Maude, 'Chips Down in Suez', *Spectator*, 16 November 1956, 672-3.

Empire was 'due entirely to United States pressure.'⁹⁴ Some felt disappointed that their expectation of Anglo-American solidarity in a crisis had not been realised. Peter Smithers was reported as having told a meeting of the Conservative Foreign Affairs Committee that he 'had never based his attitude to America on sentimental grounds, but had believed that America would never stand aside if this country's vital interests were at stake.' Suez 'had convinced him that this was no longer a valid assumption.'⁹⁵

As well as these usual dissentients, the objections resonated more widely within the party. The growing Anglo-American tension before November led a delegate at that year's party conference to claim that 'there are no friendships in this world today between nations, there are only alliances' and in response to the American pressure on Sterling more than one hundred Conservative MPs signed an Early-Day motion condemning the action of the US administration and the UN.⁹⁶ Even within the Cabinet there was significant frustration at what was perceived to be a conflict precipitated by American mistakes, oscillation or intransigence rather than a diplomatic misunderstanding. Conservative politician Randolph Churchill was rare in attributing the crisis to the Eden Government, which he claimed was naive to have launched such an operation during in the final days of the 1956 US Presidential Election campaign.⁹⁷ Such confidence in American support was not uncommon; Macmillan had noted in 1953 that 'Of course, there will be quibbling ... But in the event of war, there will be no quibbling and the Americans would support us.'⁹⁸ Others were more content to blame their American ally and exonerate their own politicians. In the right-wing press before the crisis, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was often the target of criticism when the two countries failed to co-ordinate their policies in the Middle East. Before the crisis in late 1956, *Daily Express* reporter Sefton Delmer labelled Dulles as the 'Most Alarming Man Alive'

⁹⁴ 'Russia? Let's worry about those threats from the US, says MP', *Daily Express*, 26 November 1956, 2.

⁹⁵ Minutes of the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee, 14 November 1956, CRD 2/34/2, CPA.

⁹⁶ *76th Annual Conference of the Conservative and Unionist Associations*, 1956, 33.

⁹⁷ Randolph Churchill, *The Rise and Fall of Sir Anthony Eden* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1959), 257.

⁹⁸ Alastair Horne, *Macmillan, 1894-1956* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 375.

because he believed the statesman was a ‘man who sets out to cross a road without looking and then when he is half way across tries to rush back again.’⁹⁹ Dulles provided a scapegoat for Britons frustrated by American policy which was fuelled by the presumption of British superiority in diplomacy. *The Times* editor William Haley was convinced after meetings with US officials that ‘I knew much more about Suez than they did’ and Conservative MP Robert Boothby asserted in 1960 that ‘Dulles himself, and Dulles alone, had precipitated the Suez crisis.’¹⁰⁰ Criticisms of the Secretary of State were rarely consistent and at times contradictory as he was variously described as being too religious, a vacillator or overly bombastic. The memoirs published decades afterwards by Conservative politicians and Cabinet ministers demonstrated that their frustration with Dulles failed to diminish over time. According to Chief Whip Edward Heath, the Secretary of State was ‘as devious a character as I have met’ whilst Selwyn Lloyd remembered his consternation when Dulles later asked him why the British invasion had been abandoned.¹⁰¹ Lloyd, who was Foreign Secretary during the crisis, recalled his surprise because Dulles ‘had led the pack against us, supported the transfer of the matter from the Security Council to the General Assembly and pulled out every stop to defeat us.’¹⁰² Notably, though, few other Americans were accorded the same degree of critical commentary as Dulles and critics accepted the conventional wisdom that Eisenhower was the stooge of his Secretary of State.

Suez was for the remainder of the period frequently regarded afterwards as a watershed in the growth of anti-Americanism. Before 1956, allegations about anti-Americanism had been mainly levelled at the ‘Bevanites’ and the Labour left but the outspoken Conservative protests over Suez caused commentators and journalists to identify the phenomenon’s prevalence in right-wing circles. The *Spectator* editorialised that the attitude was ‘stronger now than it has been

⁹⁹ Sefton Delmer, ‘How can we exploit this explosion?’ *Daily Express*, 22 October 1956, 6

¹⁰⁰ Alastair Hetherington, *Guardian Years*, 13n; Lord Boothby, ‘Suez in Retrospect’, in *My Yesterday, Your Tomorrow* (London: Hutchinson, 1962), 63. Reginald Maudling, *Memoirs* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1978); Chief Whip Edward Heath described him ‘as devious a character as I have ever met’, Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998), 167.

¹⁰¹ Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998), 167.

¹⁰² Selwyn Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978), 219.

for years' and a *Daily Sketch* journalist even claimed that 'at least half of the Parliamentary Tories can be classed as anti-American at this time.'¹⁰³ According to journalist Constantine Fitzgibbon, the incident epitomised the right-wing strand of anti-Americanism which was based on the belief 'that power is theirs by right and therefore resent it when others (particularly allies) are more powerful than they.' This was an attitude which Fitzgibbon believed had been 'strongly reinforced by Suez.'¹⁰⁴ The Conservative protests were typically described as another manifestation of the envy and resentment felt by Britons as their apparent post-war decline *vis-à-vis* the US.¹⁰⁵ Writer and academic Martin Green expanded on this theme, arguing that the educated Englishman was 'made hostile to America, as he is hostile to democracy and contemporaneity and normality.'¹⁰⁶ For Green, hostility towards the US was linked with a broader cultural and existential crisis as Britain, he observed, had lost its role as the 'world's pulse beat' and was consequently 'neither an important work place nor a good play place' but 'merely drab.' Its political life, Green argued, was redolent of previous declining empires and 'foreign policy, when any initiative is taken, has an air of fantasy – the Suez adventure reminds one fatally of Napoleon III's military escapades.'¹⁰⁷ As studies of Britain's post-war 'decline' proliferated, the diplomatic episode was regularly cited as evidence of the UK's malaise or an incident which demonstrated the mediocrity of the elite. In 1959, Tory politician Christopher Hollis noted that it had damaged 'confidence in governmental sanity' whilst Rex Malik described the 'near stupidity, the bungling, the incompetence and general flabbiness of what poses for leadership in one of the most complex societies ever run by man.'¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ 'Anti-Americanism', *Spectator*, 30 November 1956, 771-2; 'Candidus', 'Come on Ike TELL US!', *Daily Sketch*, 29 November 1956. See also 'Britain and America', *Daily Mail*, 29 November 1956, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Constantine Fitzgibbon, 'Anti-American Zoo', *Encounter*, July 1959, 1.

¹⁰⁵ See for example 'Anti-American Attitudes: A Symposium', *Listener*, 19 April 1962, 668-9; Kingsley Amis, 'America, 1960'; Marcus Cunliffe, 'The Anatomy of Anti-Americanism', in Rob Kroes and Maarten van Rossem (eds), *Anti-Americanism in Europe*, 21.

¹⁰⁶ Martin Green, *A Mirror for Anglo-Saxons* (London: Longmans, 1961 [1957]), 35. In common with other academics, Green avoided the use of the term anti-Americanism when describing British views about the US.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁰⁸ Christopher Hollis, 'Parliament and the Establishment' in Hugh Thomas (ed), *The Establishment* (London: Ace, 1962 [1959]), 174; Rex Malik, *What's Wrong with British Industry?* (London: Penguin, 1964), 10.

Despite these claims that Suez marked the growth in anti-Americanism as Britons realised the extent of their post-war decline relative to Washington, the protests amongst Conservative MPs were brief. Furthermore, the incident showed that it was rare in Britain's bipolar political system for both parties simultaneously to voice protests about US foreign policy. Labour's leadership used the incident to attack their opponents' Atlanticist credentials; in the House of Commons Gaitskell claimed that Eden was threatening the foreign policy consensus established over the past decade, as the invasion of Egypt risked damaging relations with Washington, the UN and the Commonwealth. About the Anglo-American relationship, he told MPs that 'Some of us on both sides of the House have worked very hard to strengthen and improve that alliance' and 'a far greater strain is now being placed upon the Anglo-American alliance than ever before.'¹⁰⁹

The tension in the Conservative efforts to combine imperial and Atlantic ties was not resolved by the events during the crisis and continued to underpin the party's attitudes towards the Anglo-American relationship. There was some truth in John Ramsden's claim that the furore over Suez was 'the last episodes of an old Empire mentality that was soon to pass away' but the attitude was still apparent in the mid-1960s.¹¹⁰ After replacing Eden as Prime Minister in January 1957, Harold Macmillan embarked on a concerted campaign to repair the seemingly fractured relationship with Washington and the Suez Crisis was unusual for the intensity and outspokenness of right-wing opposition to the US. The protestors lost some of its leadership when Julian Amery (Macmillan's son-in-law) was appointed to the newly-formed administration. Nonetheless, continued doubts were expressed within the party, not least by the members of the Suez Group who resigned the Conservative whip in mid-1957. Moreover, there were signs that the British public continued to support the operation in the late 1950s. Not only did the Macmillan Government increase its Parliamentary majority in 1959 but Gallup polls even suggested that 23 percent of Britons

¹⁰⁹ Hugh Gaitskell, HC Deb, 31 October 1956, *Hansard*, Volume 558, Columns 1455-6.

¹¹⁰ John Ramsden, 'The Conservative Party and the Special Relationship', in Antoine Capet and AïssatouSy-Wonyu, *The "Special Relationship"* (Rouen: Rouen University Publications, 2003), 197.

identified the Suez Crisis and ‘standing up to Nasser’ as the greatest achievement of the Conservatives in office.¹¹¹ This figure was even higher amongst Conservatives (38 percent) and was the success most frequently cited by the public. Few Conservatives were later willing to accept any responsibility for the crisis which was more frequently portrayed as an example of capricious of misguided US diplomacy. The notes provided by the party to its general election candidates in 1959 advised that:

We cannot accept the position that the British initiative must depend on our calculation as to American reactions. Nevertheless, the fact that the United States took the lead against us in the United Nations was not to be expected and we believe that this has since been regretted by many American leaders. That the Americans took up an initiative which they have since regretted should not be a reason for reproach to the British Government.¹¹²

Although there was faith that the Conservative Government’s actions were justified by the subsequent policies of Washington, there were signs in the right-wing press of residual resentment about Suez. At the time of Suez, Conservatives drew similar parallels with American policy in Panama, claiming that Washington would have acted similarly in Latin America.¹¹³ In 1961 after the administration of President Kennedy launched a failed coup in communist Cuba, conservative commentators described this decision as analogous with Britain’s thwarted intervention in the Middle East. Nonetheless, these could often be voiced in conjunction with calls for continued co-operation. During the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the *News of the World* voiced support of American policy but noted ‘We recall the Suez situation, and it would be less than human not to remember that Washington did not then give the same immediate assurances. But all that should be forgotten. In this struggle we are united.’¹¹⁴

As much as Suez became a longstanding source of bitterness amongst Conservatives, it was the result of more complicated factors than the simple

¹¹¹ BIPO Survey, October 1957, CCO 180/21/1/2, CPA.

¹¹² ‘1959 General Election – Questions of Policy’, CRD 2/48/108, CPA.

¹¹³ Speech by Lord Hailsham at Chester, 14 November 1958, CRD 2/34/28, CPA.

¹¹⁴ ‘Opinion: We Must Play Our Part’, *News of the World*, 28 October 1962, 10.

jealousy or envy at having been supplanted by Washington. Subsequent events in the Middle East which witnessed the US playing an enhanced role in the region did not result in the same right-wing protests or hostility. When the Eisenhower Doctrine was promulgated by the President in January 1957, the American administration pledged to intervene in the region in order to resist any evidence of communist expansion. Though this might have been interpreted as further evidence of Washington's desire to undermine the British Empire, the policy was largely welcomed by right-wing commentators and within the Conservative Party. A memorandum to the party's MPs written by Oliver Poole noted that Washington had 'at last accepted her vital responsibility to keep the peace in this vital and troubled area,' a development 'which the British Government has long sought.'¹¹⁵ That the Americans appeared to have undergone a *volte-face* since the crisis seemed to prove the sagacity of the operation. The party's *Weekly News Letter* was more explicit as it asked 'If Britain had not acted in Egypt, does anyone believe that the Eisenhower Declaration would have been made, or that it would not have been made too late?'¹¹⁶ The reactions in the conservative press were mixed but there were few outspoken complaints about Britain having been supplanted by the US. The *Daily Mail* suggested that the speech was 'at least a partial confirmation of Sir Anthony Eden's claim that time will justify his actions' whilst the *Sunday Times* told readers:

We must be thankful for this beginning to an American policy in the Middle East; for its motives are sound, its purpose necessary, and it decisively ranges the United States alongside ourselves in the defence of an area whose security is for us a matter of life and death.¹¹⁷

Finding a Role

Although Suez is often regarded as a watershed after which Britain began to realise its diminished role in relation to Washington and growing dependence

¹¹⁵ Oliver Poole, 'The United States in the Middle East', 6 January 1957, CRD 2/34/29, CPA.

¹¹⁶ 'History Repeating Itself', *Weekly News Letter*, 12 January 1957, 1.

¹¹⁷ 'Prelude to a Policy', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 January 1957, 8.

on the US, the conflicting pressure of fulfilling an Imperial and Atlantic role continued into the 1960s.¹¹⁸ When Gallup asked Britons in 1961 to name the most important international alignment, 48 per cent of respondents identified the Commonwealth whilst only 19 and 18 per cent respectively pointed to the US and Europe.¹¹⁹ The pessimism about Britain's world role which existed in some quarters was exacerbated by the decolonisation of vast sections of sub-Saharan Africa and economic statistics which seemed to suggest that Britain was performing poorly in comparison with other industrialised Western countries. As a concept for understanding Britain's recent history, 'decline' became more central by the early 1960s. Statistics about the UK's flagging economic performance were widely cited and Macmillan privately complained in 1962 that '[i]f only all the people who write, lecture, broadcast, and even preach about economic growth did some useful work, the increase in manpower wd [sic] perhaps enable us to achieve it.'¹²⁰ This idea had long been implicit in British politics but achieved greater attention in the early 1960s. The Anglo-American Council on Productivity from 1948-52 demonstrated the popularity of the belief that Britain was lagging behind America but by the time of the 1964 General Election Labour berated the Conservative Government for having overseen 'thirteen wasted years.' Developing a case about British decline, the then Labour leader Harold Wilson compared British and American industrial methods, describing that:

An enquiry comes in: we are still composing a tepid reply while our German or American rival has already hopped on a 'plane. We send commercial travellers, keen and dedicated perhaps: they send top directors. We too often allow complaints about spares and aftersales servicing to go unanswered: they charter a plane and take urgent action.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ For the articulation of this idea about Britain's diminished world role see David Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role: British Foreign Policy since 1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990).

¹¹⁹ Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 81. This was a lower proportion than those who had reported in a 1955 survey that the Commonwealth should 'stay the same' (82 per cent) as opposed to 'break up' (5 per cent). BIPO Survey 422, January 1955, CCO 180/21/1/1, CPA.

¹²⁰ Peter Catterall (ed), *The Diaries of Harold Macmillan: Prime Minister and After*, 16 February 1962, 450.

¹²¹ Harold Wilson, *The Relevance of British Socialism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 25.

The belief that Americans were inconsistent in their policies towards the British Empire and developing world continued to be voiced as the process of decolonisation accelerated in the late 1950s. Despite the confidence that the imperial ties remained central to the UK's foreign policy, large sections of sub-Saharan Africa were granted independence and Britain applied to join the EEC in 1961. The growing calls for national liberation needed to be managed in order to prevent the socio-economic instability in the non-aligned world which was thought to enable communist expansion. Washington's strident anti-colonialist rhetoric was less prominent when it threatened to be disruptive in Latin America. In British Guyana, for example, there was frustration that the US opposed the Conservative Government's policy that the country should move towards independence. An exchange between President Kennedy and Colonial Secretary Iain Macleod revealed the differences on the topic as the American laughed when Macleod asked 'do I understand that you want us to go as quickly as possible towards independence everywhere else all over the world but not on your doorstep in British Guiana?'¹²² Just as Suez continued to rankle with senior Conservatives, this apparent inconsistency in American policy was duly noted by right-wing politicians. Macmillan privately noted that it was 'rather fun making the Americans repeat over and over again their passionate plea to us to stick to 'Colonialism' and 'Imperialism' at all costs.'¹²³

Debates about Britain's involvement with the nascent European Economic Community were also conducted with some reference to the Anglo-American relationship. The earliest opposition to the 'special relationship' was motivated by the belief that the UK could be central to a 'third force' in Europe which was independent of both superpowers.¹²⁴ Britain's initial reluctance about being involved with a supranational project which could distract from the Atlantic Alliance or the Commonwealth began to change by the end of the 1950s. Scepticism about the European project was still the dominant reaction and some

¹²² Robert Shepherd, *Iain Macleod: A Biography* (London: Pimlico, 1995), 239.

¹²³ Peter Catterall (ed), *The Diaries of Harold Macmillan: Prime Minister and After*, 17 July 1963, 578.

¹²⁴ R. H. S. Crossman, Michael Foot and Ian Mikardo, *Keep Left*.

critics suggested that Washington had pressurised the British Government into pursuing this option. Because the continent represented the most likely point of Soviet expansion and a potential focal point of East-West hostilities, consecutive US administrations encouraged the integration of Europe. Figures from both political parties expressed their suspicion that Britain was being pressured by Washington to apply for membership of the organisation. At a meeting of the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee in 1953, Eden dismissed suggestions that Washington was exerting pressure on Britain to join the European Defence Committee but such concerns persisted after the UK's first application in 1961 to join the EEC.¹²⁵ In a Parliamentary debate about the subject, there was agreement amongst left and right-wing critics of the 'special relationship' that Washington had pressurised the Conservative Government into applying for membership of the organisation. Labour MP Jennie Lee was not alone in stressing that '[n]o matter how much I admire my American friends and wish for good Anglo-American relations, I hotly resent the way in which time and time again, at crucial moments in our history, America has interfered in a way going far beyond the bounds of propriety.'¹²⁶

The need to retain some influence over decision-making in Washington featured in the arguments of both the advocates and opponents of British membership of the nascent EEC. Supporters argued that the UK could become irrelevant in international affairs if it did not integrate with Europe. For Labour politician Roy Jenkins writing in 1962, there was 'no use pretending that it will help us to co-operate with the new frontiersmen in Washington if we remain extremely stubborn old frontiersmen in Europe.'¹²⁷ Others who were impressed with the post-war American economic success argued that the achievements of the US and USSR in Europe could be replicated in Europe if co-operation led to greater unity and a similar reduction of tariff barriers.¹²⁸ An issue which provoked divisions on the left, the critics of membership pointed out that the

¹²⁵ Minutes of the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee, 26 February 1953, CRD 2/34/1, CPA.

¹²⁶ Jennie Lee, HC Deb, 2 August 1961, *Hansard*, Volume 645, Column 1548.

¹²⁷ Douglas Jay and Roy Jenkins, *The Common Market* (London: Fabian Society, 1962), 11.

¹²⁸ Seymour Cocks, RWG Mackay and Maurice Edelman, *Europe's First Parliament* (London: Fabian Society, 1950).

EEC could weaken Britain's ties with NATO and the Commonwealth or diminish British influence over the US.¹²⁹ In 1960, Denis Healey suggested that joining the EEC 'might greatly weaken Britain's ability to influence the outcome of the two major issues of our age – the Cold War between the West and the Communist bloc, and the problems of Afro-Asia.'¹³⁰ Although there were different attitudes towards Britain's membership with Europe, the Anglo-American alliance was by the end of the period increasingly mediated and shaped by these views on the EEC. Reflecting on his period as Foreign Secretary after leaving office in 1960, Selwyn Lloyd disputed the notion that Macmillan had been dominated by the desire to remain close to Eisenhower noting that it 'has been the kernel of Foreign Office policy' and 'was Winston's policy and Eden's (even over Suez, Eden really believed that the U.S. would be benevolently neutral).' Lloyd noted that the Foreign Office 'have been loyal to the Anglo/U.S. relationship to such an extent that I have had from time to time to try to impress the importance of [...] Europe.'¹³¹

Conclusions

Throughout the long 1950s, there was tension between Britain's Atlantic and Imperial roles and responsibilities as policy-makers sought to reconcile the nascent commitment to a 'special relationship' with the attachment to the Empire and Commonwealth. Some Conservatives regarded Washington's foreign policy as a threat to British interests but there were others who insisted that the two countries were linked by a common heritage with the US acting as the successor to Britain. The attempt to balance these relationships and alliances was at times strained, particularly when it was perceived that American policies aimed to undermine Britain's global links or economic fortunes. Despite the occasional difficulties in pursuing these separate links, there were seldom signs of open conflict on the subject as the Conservatives were less frequently

¹²⁹ William Pickles, *Not With Europe: the political case for staying out* (London: Fabian Society, 1962).

¹³⁰ Denis Healey, 'Britain's Relations with Europe', 15 June 1960, C/211, Hugh Gaitskell Papers.

¹³¹ Selwyn Lloyd, 'Notes after Leaving Office in 1960', Selwyn Lloyd Papers, SELO 4/22, CCC.

involved in public disputes about the subject. Even the Suez Crisis — which has often been identified as a turning point in British foreign policy — failed to prompt a major re-evaluation of the UK's world role as few Conservatives accepted the idea that it had been a mistake. The 1950s was an era during which both countries experienced changes in their international roles. Given the complexity of this process, though, it is inadequate to ascribe the opposition towards US foreign policy or criticism of its objectives as mere envy, resentment and bitterness which manifested itself as anti-Americanism. The idea that Britain had declined in relation to the US — which was central to this assumption that neuroses fuelled anti-American sentiment — was questionable. In spite of the growing debate about 'decline' by the early 1960s, Britain remained an international actor with global aims and objectives, which made many interested observers reluctant to accept the evidence of their diminished status. Moreover, the objections voiced when Washington's international policy seemed to undermine the Empire and Commonwealth or Britain's economic objectives were not so much the result of irrational prejudices as the result of divergent aims and interests of both countries. Chapter Four explores an issue which was closely associated with these questions of British independence from Washington. As the UK suffered periodic financial crises, it was less able to compete with the US on defence questions or exercise an independent policy, particularly concerning the manufacture of nuclear weapons. It assesses the ways in which various subjects pertaining to the defence relationship were debated for evidence of the responses to the growing links with the US and interdependence of their policies.

Chapter Four:

Defence

On 3 October 1952, the British Government exploded its first atomic weapon over the Montebello Islands, becoming the first country besides the United States and the Soviet Union to manufacture nuclear weapons. Although the US had by this point already possessed the device for seven years and had a monopoly over the weapon until 1949, many British observers concluded that the United Kingdom had overturned Washington's advantage in nuclear research. Because the British explosion did not resemble the familiar mushroom cloud but appeared 'z-shaped,' it was believed that the tests heralded new advancements as with several wondered if the test was the first detonation of a hydrogen bomb.¹ Headlines stressed that the atomic tests had boosted Britain's international prestige, particularly *vis-à-vis* the American Government: the *Daily Express* announced 'One up on America' whilst the *Daily Mirror* boasted that 'Today Britain is GREAT BRITAIN again.'² The British Government was keen to encourage the idea that the successful test demonstrated independence from Washington; no Americans were invited to oversee the proceedings and Australia was chosen as a test site for this reason.³ The *Economist* at least was convinced by this window dressing and asserted that Prime Minister Winston Churchill should now 'be able to formulate much convincingly than hitherto — to the Americans and others — his views on what strategy should be in the age of atomic artillery and guided missiles.'⁴ When five years later the UK tested its first hydrogen bomb, various commentators drew similar conclusions and again judged the event with reference to American achievements. The *Daily Mail* editorialised that Britain had 'regained her independence' because previously she 'was, let us now admit it, a nuclear satellite of the United States.'⁵ Writing in the *Daily Express*, Chapman Pincher praised Sir William Penney, the

¹ 'The world asks: Was it H-bomb?' *Daily Mirror*, 4 October 1952, 1.

² 'One up on America', *Daily Express*, 3 October 1952, 4; Bill Greig, 'This Bang has Changed the World', *Daily Mirror*, 4 October 1952, 1.

³ John Baylis, *Anglo-American Defence Relations 1939-1984: The Special Relationship* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 66 and 70.

⁴ 'A Bomb of One's Own', *Economist*, 11 October 1952, 76.

⁵ 'Momentous Bang', *Daily Mail*, 16 May 1957, 1.

scientist who was headed the team responsible for the development of Britain's hydrogen and atomic weapons, as the 'quintessence of the quiet Englishman,' remarking that 'the Americans have no comparable character.'⁶ Not all were as ready to accept that this provided Britain with leverage over Washington. Labour MP Richard Crossman challenged the Conservative Government's 'delusions of grandeur' and claimed that the 'production of a British H-bomb will to my mind do nothing whatsoever to reduce this humiliating dependence on the United States.'⁷

These reactions to the explosions of British atomic and hydrogen weapons demonstrate the extent to which developments in the UK's nuclear and defence policy were judged against those of Washington and provoked debate about the state of the Anglo-American relationship. The close defence links between the two countries were one aspect of the alliance which contributed to its unique status in international relations. Both countries were major contributors to NATO, the United States Air Force (USAF) controlled a network of RAF bases in England, and by the early 1960s Britain's nuclear deterrent was acquired from the US. However, this aspect of the relationship often caused friction and frustration for Britons because it exemplified the concerns about the UK's subservience within the 'special relationship,' or dependence on Washington. This chapter examines the responses in Britain to the development of various aspects of the defence partnership during the long 1950s. By evaluating debates about NATO, nuclear weapons and US bases, it investigates the ways in which Britons reacted to the various features of the growing links between the two countries, particularly as the growing defence ties meant reliance on American officials. Through an examination of the ideas of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the group which by the late 1950s provided the most prominent opposition to the Anglo-American defence relationship, it also examines the section of British politics which was most sceptical about the defence ties and renowned for its 'anti-Americanism.' Ultimately, it suggests that several assumptions were shared in Britain despite the differing positions on defence policy and the conflict which was often fierce by the end of the

⁶ Chapman Pincher, 'H-Bomb Penney', *Daily Express*, 16 May 1957, 4.

⁷ R. H. S. Crossman, 'Crossman Says ...' *Daily Mirror*, 17 May 1957, 8.

decade. It was common for commentators and politicians from across the political spectrum who disagreed on foreign and defence policy to argue that Britain could influence American defence policy. Moreover, the shared language and close ties between the two countries ensured that American ideas about the subject were accessible and widely discussed and debated by a wide variety of British onlookers.

NATO, Containment and Anglo-American Defence

Throughout the long 1950s, the Anglo-American defence co-operation ranked as one of the most intimate features of the alliance and distinguished it from other bilateral relationships. As Cold War tension escalated in the years after the Second World War, this aspect of the 'special relationship' conformed to the general pattern of the alliance: growing co-operation occurred in spite of occasional discord about certain issues.⁸ Amidst diplomatic disagreements over the sudden cancellation of Lend-Lease, the terms of the post-war Anglo-American Loan and the future of Palestine, the defence ties formed in wartime dwindled or were dismantled entirely. The field of atomic energy was one such area in which the defence partnership initially foundered, as peacetime resulted in the end of the collaboration apparent since 1943 through the Manhattan Project. Though informal agreements had specified co-operation ought to continue after the end of the Second World War, the US Senate passed the McMahon Act in 1946 which forbade the American Government from sharing nuclear research with its allies. Despite this evidence of deterioration in the defence links which had helped to defeat Nazi Germany, the alleged threat of Soviet expansionism helped to revive the defence partnership in the late 1940s. As a result of the 1948 blockade of Berlin, seventy American B29s with the capability of delivering nuclear weapons were located in East Anglia but the USAF had sought the usage of RAF for several years before its return. The anti-communism which was widely articulated across the British political spectrum provided the main justification for this relationship. It led to the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949 and, though tension

⁸ John Baylis, *Anglo-American Defence Relations 1939-1984*, 29-56.

continued to be apparent on nuclear questions, the outbreak of war in Korea in 1950 led to the organisation's expansion and the Attlee Government's decision under US pressure to increase expenditure on rearmament.

According to those who supported a close Anglo-American relationship as a response to the putative aggression of the Soviet Union, it was important for Britain to make a valid contribution to the Cold War efforts at containment. For the editors of *Socialist Commentary*, being involved with the combined efforts to withstand Russian belligerence were important even if they appeared to contradict 'socialist' values:

We cannot shirk the tasks arising from the deadly danger of Russian expansion, but these very tasks- which mean a pre-occupation with rearmament and defence- severely limit our freedom to shape the world according to our dreams. We are compelled to operate in the thick of sordid power strategies- a calamity which former generations of socialists ... had hoped to avoid.⁹

A journalist in another left-wing Atlanticist journal *Labour Woman* supported rearmament for similar reasons because 'of the preponderance of Russian armed forces and her immense strategic advantages we cannot rely on the superior industrial *potential* of the West.' Moreover, it was noted, the 'Atlantic Pact will not be effective without adequate arms.'¹⁰ Although Conservatives and Labour both denigrated one another's capability in managing defence issues as allegations of right-wing warmongering and left-wing pacifism were exchanged in political debates, both parties shared this support for the Anglo-American defence relationship. A Conservative Party statement seemed relaxed about the prospect of sheltering under the American nuclear umbrella given the greater threat of Russian expansion. It asserted that 'Nothing stands between Europe to-day and the complete subjugation to Communist tyranny but the atomic bomb in American possession.'¹¹ In line with their Labour Party rivals, Shadow Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden noted that Britain, in order to be listened to around the world, should build up its defences 'with all speed and

⁹ 'Symposium on International Policy: Ideals and Realities', *Socialist Commentary* (May 1951).

¹⁰ Mary Allan, 'How much Rearmament?' *Labour Woman*, October 1951, 195.

¹¹ Conservative Party, *Weekend Talking Point No. 129*, 5 August 1950, 1

vigour, not to make a war, but negotiate peace through strength.’¹² NATO was unfamiliar to many Britons compared with other international organisations as only 38 percent were able correctly to identify the meaning of its initials in December 1957 almost a decade after its creation.¹³ Nonetheless, membership of NATO was a key tenet of the agenda of both parties and their ancillary organisations throughout the period. The Labour Government’s role in its formation was an important aspect of the foreign and defence policy legacy of post-war Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin. When by the end of the 1950s there were calls on the left for British withdrawal, these were met with suggestions such action would amount to a betrayal of the UK’s main ally and supporters maintained that it was a defensive grouping which aimed to prevent Soviet expansion.¹⁴

Although NATO was an important element of Britain’s defence policy after 1945, there were various doubts about the balance of power within the alliance as well as complaints about the amount of expenditure devoted to military spending. The dominant historical narrative concerning the defence alliance has emphasised British subservience or, as Melissa Pine has put it, the ‘accepted story is one of increasing British dependence on the United States.’¹⁵ Signs of British unease about this supposed American hegemony within the alliance were apparent early in the decade and many contemporary observers would likely have agreed with Christopher Grayling and Christopher Langdon’s later judgement that the creation of NATO illustrated ‘just how dependent Europe had become on the United States and how relatively powerless Britain now was.’¹⁶ This was particularly true of the pacifistic sections of the British left which persistently voiced concern about the activities of the US Pentagon as unease about the military establishment across the Atlantic was apparent regardless of which party controlled the White House. Left-wing Labour MP

¹² Conservative Party Weekend Talking Point *No. 153*, 2 June 1951, 1

¹³ BIPO Survey CQ 498/508, December 1957, CCO 180/2/1/2, CPA. By contrast, 68 percent could identify the meaning of UNO.

¹⁴ R. G. Cook, ‘The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation’, *NUGMWJ*, November 1958, 345.

¹⁵ Melissa Pine, ‘Transatlantic Nuclear Cooperation: The British Perspective, 1945-1991’, in Matthew Grant (ed), *British Way in Cold Warfare Intelligence, Diplomacy and the Bomb, 1945-1975* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009), 105.

¹⁶ Christopher Grayling and Christopher Langdon, *Just Another Star? Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (London: Harrap, 1988), 8.

Bob Edwards criticised the Pentagon in 1962, describing it as ‘a state within a state transforming democratic principles into a mockery.’¹⁷ Added to these concerns about being too closely linked with US policy-makers was the belief that the Anglo-American relationship diverted government expenditure, which was best spent on socio-economic issues instead of defence. This was amongst the reasons for Aneurin Bevan’s resignation from the Cabinet in 1951 and, in *Tribune* journalist Mervyn Jones’s 1953 novel *The New Town*, these ideas were closely linked with other grievances about the Anglo-American relationship. Set in the fictional new town of Long Ness in the final months of the Attlee Government, it stressed the negative impact of the Korean War on Labour’s socio-economic agenda. When rearmament causes reductions in expenditure on the housing project, the government agrees to allow the US controlled Anglo-Saxon Oil Company to build a refinery in the area in exchange for funding the completion of the town. Despite the concerns of the idealistic yet indecisive planner Harry Peterson and a handful of left-wing activists, the refinery’s construction is supported by an alliance of local right-wing Labour figures, Conservatives and US big businessmen. These were more substantial grievances on Jones’s part than one reviewer in the *Listener* appreciated, writing that the book was one of several novels in which America was regarded ‘with a mixture of terror and awe’ as the US was ‘living a life of power, splendour — and damage — remote from our reach.’¹⁸ However, Jones had criticised the power of US big business in *Tribune* and his novel reflected some popular concerns that the defence relationship could derail Labour’s socio-economic reforms.

Equally problematic as these ethical concerns was the perception in Britain that the US dominated the defence arrangements. Amongst Conservatives, there was frustration when Britain was excluded from the ANZUS Pact in the Pacific between Australia, New Zealand and the US. At the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee, future Colonial Secretary Alan Lennox-Boyd warned that the UK ‘must not slip into an inferior position; we must be a party to any

¹⁷ Bob Edwards, *America: Ally or Master?* (London: Union for Democratic Control, 1962), 1.

¹⁸ John Lehmann, ‘New Novels’, *Listener*, 19 February 1953, 321.

regional pacts within the Empire.’¹⁹ As NATO expanded in the early 1950s with the creation of Supreme Commanders for the Atlantic (SACLANT) and Europe (SACEUR), there were additional anxieties that Britons were overlooked or marginal in policy-making. With the announcement in 1951 that an American General would command NATO forces in the North Atlantic, there was incredulity that Britain seemed to have been supplanted in an area which was vital to its foreign and defence policy. On the BBC radio programme *Argument*, Conservative politician Randolph Churchill claimed that for Britain unlike the US, the area was ‘a matter of life and death.’ Though not opposed to the creation of the position in principle, the former MP and son of Winston Churchill was typical amongst Conservative opinion in noting that a ‘nation which shirks its primary responsibility cannot hope to maintain its prestige or its power in this wicked modern world.’ It was left to the left-wing Labour MP and journalist Tom Driberg to counter Churchill as he remarked that ‘if you accept the basis of the North Atlantic Treaty [...] then it is really quite irresponsible and unstatesmanlike to start nattering about something which may have some demagogic appeal, and to behave in this way and to kick up a great hullabaloo.’²⁰ As somebody with links to the Labour left who had opposed the formation of NATO in 1949, it was unusual for Driberg ostensibly to be defending the organisation, especially given that the ‘Bevanites’ would be subjected to charges of anti-Americanism only weeks later after Bevan’s resignation from the Cabinet. On the occasion of the debate about SACLANT, the members of the Keep Left Group within the Labour Party were more eager to criticise the Conservatives than British subservience to Washington. This group of Labour critics of the ‘special relationship’ stressed that the Tory objections were evidence ‘that each of the NATO countries is still not ready for the degree of abandonment of national sovereignty without which NATO can’t work.’²¹

¹⁹ Minutes of the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee, 25 April 1951, CRD 2/34/1, CPA.

²⁰ ‘Argument’, BBC Light Programme, 28 February 1951, T59, RSL, WAC.

²¹ ‘NATO Naval Command’, 27 February 1951, LP/RICH/3/2/5, LHASC.

Criticism of British membership of NATO was cautious and usually confined to the fringes of the political system. The Labour MPs who opposed the organisation's establishment in 1949 were soon expelled from the party and thereafter had a marginal position in British politics.²² *One Way Only* stopped short of calling for Britain's withdrawal from the Atlantic Alliance and Labour activists were similarly reluctant to call for a break. Of the responses to Labour's 1952 survey of attitudes to foreign affairs within the party only a handful of respondents were reported as being 'against NATO,' with the opponents of the organisation almost equal to those who called for its development.²³ Although the Bevanites gained a reputation for anti-Americanism because of this position and due to their criticism of rearmament in 1951, these concerns were prescient given that the Attlee Government had by the time of its defeat begun to attempt to control inflation by limiting defence expenditure and the Churchill administration which succeeded it reduced it altogether.²⁴ Nonetheless, there were evidently some doubts about the arrangements even if few senior politicians would admit them at the time. George Brown, Labour's Shadow Defence Secretary during the 1950s, later recalled that NATO 'wasn't really an alliance of fourteen powers – it was thirteen little chaps who couldn't say 'Boo' to a goose, the goose being, of course, America.'²⁵

Whose Finger on the Button?

These questions and anxieties about who was responsible for strategy within NATO and the Anglo-American relationship caused extensive debate in Britain. It was not only a matter of whether British politicians had an important say in influencing successive American administrations but also centred on the role of

²² For the statements by the few opponents of NATO see D. N. Pritt, Lester Hutchinson, John Platts-Mills and Leslie Solley, *Crisis and Cure: The Socialist Way to Prosperity and Peace* (London: London Caledonian Press, 1950).

²³ 'Analysis of Comments on Discussion Pamphlet "Labour's Foreign Policy"', [n.d.], International Sub-Committee of the NEC Papers, LHASA.

²⁴ Michael Dockrill, *British Defence since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 44.

²⁵ George Brown, *In My Way: Memoirs*, 140. Despite these comments, Brown remained a firm supporter of the Anglo-American defence relationship. He also noted in the 1971 publication that 'our defence policy must be tied in with the Americans' in order to prevent a return to US isolationism. *Ibid*, 214-5.

defence and military personnel in foreign policy decision-making. As co-operation between the two countries increased and Britain was reliant on the American nuclear umbrella, there were worries that an errant official could instigate world war. British governments attempted to secure understandings that the bomb would not be used without allied consultation but obtaining a formal agreement to this effect proved elusive. Attlee was unable to reach such an agreement from Harry Truman after a visit to Washington in 1950 and a deal concluded by Winston Churchill and Truman in 1952 claimed only that 'the use of these bases in an emergency would be a matter for joint decision [...] in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time.'²⁶ Although this agreement amounted to neither a contract nor a treaty, it was regularly reiterated throughout the decade. Subtle semantic differences between consultation, guidance, counselling and influence concealed some of the uncertainties about British control but, for Duncan Campbell writing in the 1980s, the idea of 'joint decision-making' during a crisis was 'quite absurd.'²⁷

Throughout the decade and even after Britain acquired nuclear weapons, there was sensitivity amongst British policy-makers about their ability to influence their American ally. This was particularly the case because several servicemen provoked criticism in Britain because of their temperament or political views. Few attracted the same amount of controversy as Douglas MacArthur. During the first year of the Korean War, the American General — who simultaneously served as an American General, Commander in Chief of UN forces in the Far East and Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in the region — personified the anxieties about the close ties. The popularity of the anti-communist response to the Korean War did not prevent questions being asked about Britain's vulnerability in a nuclear war. Not only did his various roles mean that it was unclear to whom MacArthur was accountable but his political views were unpopular in Britain. Close to the Republican 'isolationists,' MacArthur sought to defeat communism in the Far East and was close to the Formosan regime of Chiang Kai-shek. On the left, the General's

²⁶ Duncan Campbell, *The Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier: American Military Power in Britain* (London: Michael Joseph, 1984), 44.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

political background and his seemingly unilateral attempts to expand the conflict elicited criticism. With the war in Korea ongoing when M-O asked respondents in August 1950 for their attitudes towards the US, MacArthur was the most frequently mentioned US official. A 27 year-old housewife reported that ‘I do think America since the last war has become very aggressive, and I particularly dislike MacArthur.’²⁸ A 24 year-old armament artificer made a distinction between the military and civilian personnel when criticising the General. He feared ‘that people, such as MacArthur, should be in a position to influence the affairs of an adolescent nation that, at the moment, appears to control the Western world.’ Nonetheless, he noted that ‘I believe, however, that Truman’s administration will not succumb easily to their blandishments.’²⁹ Amongst the wider population the doubts were less acute as the General commanded respect for his wartime achievements, particularly from Conservatives.³⁰ When Mass Observation surveyed Londoners about the General in October 1950, the majority of respondents praised his personality or military skills.³¹ After the General was dismissed by President Truman in April 1951, though, a majority of the public approved of the decision even though there were favourable tributes to MacArthur in the House of Commons and his return to the US was extensively and at times admiringly reported in the conservative press.

That some Britons believed certain Americans could instigate a third world war was regarded by some observers as evidence of the growing British anti-Americanism. Hugh Gaitskell privately noted that this was amongst the reasons for the apparent post-war growth in the phenomenon and one post-Cold War account has noted that the fear that the US could use atomic weapons in Korea

²⁸ DR 1991, reply to August 1950 Directive, MOA. Emphasis in Original.

²⁹ DR 4032, reply to August 1950 Directive, MOA.

³⁰ Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean, ‘Background to Korea’, *News of the World*, 2 July 1950, 4; Montague Smith, ‘MacArthur: Man of Today’, 28 June 1950, 4

³¹ A News Quota conducted by Mass Observation in October 1950 found that well over half of the 150 Londoners questioned about MacArthur were well-disposed to the General. Individuals expressing criticism almost always identified as Labour, Communist or Liberal voters. For the original questionnaires see TC9/2/D, MOA.

‘resulted in increasing anti-Americanism in Britain.’³² Although figures such as MacArthur caused doubts in Britain about the American policy-making process, there was usually faith that these individuals could be curbed by more ‘moderate’ British officials or US politicians. Clement Attlee’s visit to Washington in December 1950 was one such occasion when British policy-makers were said to have exercised decisive influence over their American counterparts. After Truman implied in a press conference that the US might use nuclear weapons in the Far East, the Prime Minister embarked on a hasty trip across the Atlantic for talks with the President. Although he failed to secure assurances that the British Government would be consulted before the weapons were deployed, Attlee was widely interpreted in the UK as having prevented a third world war.³³ *Tribune* editorialised that Attlee ‘arrived in the nick of time to stop a vast expansion of the war’ and even the conservative *Daily Mail* noted that the Labour Prime Minister’s visit ‘will have a steadying effect.’³⁴ The belief that Attlee had ensured caution, which was another manifestation of the idea that Britons had diplomatic skills and experience which were invaluable to Washington, was apparent for the remainder of the period. On the left, the trip was invoked by both critics and supporters of the ‘special relationship’ as evidence that London could influence events across the Atlantic.³⁵ Despite the disagreements about the need for a close Anglo-American relationship, most on the left could agree that Britain had the potential to guide the US.³⁶ At the TUC conference in 1951, General Secretary of the far-left led Fire Brigades Union

³² Hugh Gaitskell, ‘Anti-Americanism in Britain’, June/July 1952, Philip Williams (ed), *The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell*, 317-8; Sylvia Ellis, *Historical Dictionary of Anglo-American Relations*, 150.

³³ For details of the outcomes of the Truman-Attlee talks see John Baylis, ‘American Bases in Britain: The ‘Truman-Attlee Understandings’’, *The World Today*, 42, 8/9 (1986), 155-9; Alan Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century*, 107.

³⁴ ‘Mixed Up Together’, *Daily Mail*, 8 December 1950, 1; ‘Still Time to Win a War’, *Tribune*, 15 December 1950, 3-4. See also ‘Unity of Purpose’, *News Chronicle*, 9 December 1950, 2; ‘Don’t pull your punches, Mr. Attlee’, *Reynolds News*, 3 December 1950, 1.

³⁵ In General Election leaflets and pamphlets published by the party’s candidates in 1950, the visit was frequently cited by prospective MPs. For example, Sydney George Cooper, the party’s candidate in the Isle of Wight, told electors What about Korea? I think that Churchill, with MacArthur, would have allowed war to spread to China. **Mr. Attlee saved the situation and probably saved millions of lives. MacArthur faded away!** See LP/ELEC/1951/4, LHASC. Emphasis in Original.

³⁶ *One Way Only* — the pamphlet written by the ‘Bevanite’ opponents of Attlee’s international policy — described the Prime Minister as having imposed ‘a decisive restraint’ on US policy. Aneurin Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman, *One Way Only*, 11.

John Horner used the incident to support a policy of independence from the US whilst Atlanticist Transport and General Workers' Union leader, Arthur Deakin, claimed that it showed Labour's 'sturdy independence in the field of foreign relationships.'³⁷

It was not only Attlee's visit to the US that was identified as an occasion when British policy-makers prevented the outbreak of a Third World War. When debates about Britain's possession of nuclear weapons intensified in the 1960s, Attlee's visit to Washington was again invoked by both unilateralists and those who supported the Atlantic Alliance and the development of the British nuclear deterrent. At the General and Municipal Workers' conference in 1960, Hugh Gaitskell cited the events of 1950 as an example of the need to remain in NATO and act as 'a tremendous force and influence for peace.'³⁸ Given that the meeting occurred before Britain had developed the atomic bomb, critics of the Labour leader claimed in response that Attlee's apparent success demonstrated that it was possible to guide the US even if Britain denounced nuclear weapons. As one speaker argued:

Attlee had no deterrent behind him; we had no bomb in 1950. Sanity prevailed and it prevailed because Attlee spoke on behalf of the Government of the country, and more important on behalf of you and I, the ordinary people in the country. What Attlee could do in 1950, believe me if he could do it with the Americans then he can do it with anyone else in 1960.³⁹

Right-wing commentators also pointed to occasions when Conservatives were said to have encouraged restraint in Washington, showing that both left and right on the political spectrum wanted to prove that their representatives could restrain or guide the Americans. After Churchill visited Washington in 1952, the *Economist* editorialised that 'if he has succeeded in convincing the Americans that he is a trustworthy ally in the Far East as elsewhere, he will have far more opportunity of influencing American policy towards moderation

³⁷ *TUC Report 1951*, 455 and 429.

³⁸ *General and Municipal Workers' Conference 1960*, 341.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 309. The report noted that this was met with cries of 'Balderdash.'

than ever Mr. Attlee did.’⁴⁰ More revealing of this view’s popularity in right-wing circles was the Geneva conference in 1954, during which Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was widely praised for having averted the outbreak of world war or the use of nuclear weapons in South-East Asia. During the negotiations which concluded a peace treaty in Indo-China, there were warnings that a faction within the Eisenhower administration lobbied for the use of nuclear weapons to defeat the nationalist groups that desired independence from France. In *Tribune*, Michael Foot reported the rise of a ‘Washington War Party’ including Vice-President Richard Nixon and Admiral William Radford, warning that had ‘done enormous damage, some of it irreparable.’⁴¹ When an agreement was concluded and war averted, the British press stressed the importance of Eden’s role in securing peace with the *Manchester Guardian* noting that the outcome ‘should be regarded as a triumph for the diplomacy of Mr. Eden and the energetic initiative of M. Mendes-France.’⁴² Parallels were drawn with Attlee’s visit to Washington four years earlier, not least because in both cases British officials were accused of ‘appeasement’ by their American counterparts. A Conservative Party publication reported afterwards that, as a result of the meeting, the US ‘now more fully appreciated the factor of Asian co-operation.’⁴³ During the Cuban Missile Crisis — when the American Government blocked Soviet attempts to establish a missile base in Cuba — there were again calls from the left for Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to embark on a trip to the US to guide and steady President Kennedy. Even though such a summit did not materialise, there was confidence that Macmillan had been able to exercise such a function even from the other side of the Atlantic. Remembering the incident in his memoirs, Macmillan’s Chief Whip John Boyd Carpenter claimed that the President ‘was aware of his own inexperience in such a situation, and had no doubt a rueful memory of the Bay of Pigs fiasco’ but ‘had the good sense to

⁴⁰ ‘Far Eastern Fears’, *Economist*, 26 January 1952, 189. See also ‘Far Eastern Course’, *Economist*, 2 February 1952, 278.

⁴¹ Michael Foot, ‘Washington War Party’, *Tribune*, 18 June 1954, 4. See also, ‘Heaven Save us from the Generals’, *Tribune*, 11 June 1954, 1.

⁴² ‘Peace in Asia’, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 July 1954, 4.

⁴³ *Conservative Party Weekend Talking Point*, No. 106, 17 July 1954.

recognise Harold Macmillan's experience and steadiness in a crisis.'⁴⁴ Similarly, Labour politician and the left-wing press — remembering Attlee's visit to Washington in 1950 — urged Macmillan to embark on a similar trip.⁴⁵

This British tendency to regard American servicemen as easily restrained by more rational or calm voices on both sides of the Atlantic conformed to the idea that Britons could dispense valuable wisdom, guidance and advice for the sometimes naive or excitable Americans. Uncertainties about the power and authority of these individuals tended to contribute to the idea that servicemen were easily curbed. Compared with Britain, the admirals and generals had a much greater role both in policy-making and the US also had a history of electing prominent servicemen. The unfamiliarity of this situation likely informed the confidence that military personnel would be defeated in disputes with civilian politicians and encouraged Britons to draw clear distinctions between the attitudes of the both types of policy-makers. For example, when Truman and MacArthur met on Wake Island in October 1950 as the President continued to be frustrated by his General's obduracy over Formosa, the *Daily Mail's* front-page headline read 'Truman Wins in One Hour.' Oliver Franks, the UK's former Ambassador to Washington, advanced a similar idea during a BBC Reith Lecture in 1954 as he argued that the British fear that the US could instigate a world war was the chief cause of tension between the two countries. Franks claimed that this belief had some legitimacy as 'the Americans appear to convict themselves out of their own mouths'. Nevertheless, 'The senators, the admirals, and the generals do not [...] speak for the President or for the United States.'⁴⁶

It was not only military personnel who caused anxieties for the British public. President Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's outlook on world affairs troubled various commentators in the UK. During the 1952 Presidential Election campaign, his calls for liberation of countries behind the Iron Curtain were criticised but his brinkmanship in defence policy provoked even greater suspicion about Dulles's temperament and approach to

⁴⁴ John Boyd-Carpenter, *Way of Life* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980), 153.

⁴⁵ Victor Knight, 'You must fly to Kennedy, Premier told', *Daily Mirror*, 24 October 1962, 11.

⁴⁶ Oliver Franks, 'The Atlantic Bridge', 21 November 1954.

international affairs. At a meeting of the Conservative Foreign Affairs Committee, Astor suggested that the party 'would only make themselves ridiculous if they appeared to blame Mr. Dulles for everything, without having any clear idea what was the direction of our own foreign policy.'⁴⁷ However, there was often confidence that the Secretary of State would be constrained by President Eisenhower. When Dulles was reported at the end of the Korean War to have re-stated opposition to the recognition of communist China, the *Daily Mirror* urged the need for the world to hear 'America's policy from America's President.' It noted that if 'the damage of Dulles can be undone, it will take Ike to do it.'⁴⁸ Despite the worries about American policy-makers, then, these comments demonstrated that the discussions were often based on the assumption that the US was nuanced as its political system contained various competing factions and groups. Though there were individuals and groups who caused frequent alarm in the UK, there was often confidence that they would be defeated or contained by civilian politicians. As well as showing that many commentators underestimated the influence of defence officials, it revealed their willingness to identify nuances in Washington: though Dulles was unpopular not all were believed to share his ideas.

American Bases

Concerns about the effects of American actions on Britain were intensified by the United States Air Force's (USAF) presence on British soil, a situation which Winston Churchill described as placing the UK at 'the bull's eye of a Soviet attack.'⁴⁹ After 1945, the USAF made plans to maintain and develop its presence in the UK even as the diplomatic relationship was briefly soured over the cancellation of Lend Lease and the terms of the Anglo-American loan. American military forces remained in Britain in the post-war period and began preparing for a possible war with the USSR soon after the defeat of Nazi Germany. Even before the onset of the Cold War, the USAF sought permission

⁴⁷ Minutes of the Conservative Party Foreign Affairs Committee, 22 January 1958, CRD 2/34/3, CPA.

⁴⁸ 'Speak, Ike! Speak, Britain!', *Daily Mirror*, 30 July 1953, 2.

⁴⁹ Duncan Campbell, *The Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier*, 11.

for use of RAF bases and secret agreements were concluded which gave it access to bases in East Anglia. The Berlin Blockade led to the extension of this presence, when a Cabinet committee agreed that heavy bombers could be stationed in Britain. The renewed American presence was secretive as officials sought to prevent hostility from the wider public, particularly the population in the communities surrounding the bases; defence facilities remained designated as RAF stations despite the foreign presence as British military personnel wanted to avoid charges of subservience to the US. Even so, the Labour left interpreted this growing American presence in the UK as another sign of the inequality of the Anglo-American relationship and added to its criticisms of the intimacy between the two countries. In 1955, Bevan described the bases as ‘Socially and politically obnoxious because they ‘give us the appearance of being an “occupied country” and serve to cast doubt on our freedom of action with respect to America.’⁵⁰ As well as the arguments that contributed to the unease about the subject amongst the Labour left, there were fears about social expenditure being devoted to the Americans. In *Forward*, Bevan’s ally Emrys Hughes complained that the government was building cheap housing for American military personnel whilst overlooking the needs of the local populations.⁵¹ Furthermore, there were concerns that the US presence would result in efforts to stifle criticism of the Anglo-American relationship and a delegate at the Labour Party conference in 1958 claimed that the US Federal Bureau of Investigation was discouraging Britons from protesting or enrolling as Labour members.⁵²

Despite the frequency with which the American bases were criticised on the Labour left, their objections often failed to attract wider support. Both party leaderships were supportive of bases and journalists reporting on attitudes in the vicinity of the bases often concluded that their presence had had few damaging effects on Anglo-American relations. René MacColl argued in the *Daily Express* in 1953 that the ‘news is nearly all good.’⁵³ Whether this was a

⁵⁰ Aneurin Bevan, ‘American Bases in Britain’, *Tribune*, 25 February 1955, 1.

⁵¹ Emrys Hughes, ‘Should the Americans Get These Houses?’ *Forward*, 30 July 1955, 5.

⁵² *LPACR* 1958, 216-7.

⁵³ R. M. MacColl, ‘The Yanks Among Us’, *Daily Express*, 17 February 1953, 4.

reflection of the journalists' own views or impartial evidence of public attitudes is moot but the government was evidently worried enough about the reaction to the bases to control the information that the public received about its operations. An accident at RAF Lakenheath in July 1956 was not made public knowledge until 1979 as British and American officials suppressed information about the crash-landing of a B-47 into a storage igloo. Duncan Campbell has argued that if the public had received more information about the incident, 'it is not unreasonable to suggest that its effect on British history would have been considerable.'⁵⁴ However, it is questionable whether such information would have been controversial enough to provoke a re-evaluation of the Anglo-American relationship or even prompted a greater campaign for the removal of American bases from Britain. Indeed, subsequent accounts of the Lakenheath incident have claimed that the events would never likely have resulted in nuclear explosion.⁵⁵ After the accidental dropping of a deactivated nuclear weapon in South Carolina in 1958 resulted in no fatalities, proponents of the manufacture of nuclear weapons interpreted the incident as evidence of their safety. The *Daily Express* used the incident to defend government policy, reporting that the events in the US confirmed predictions that a nuclear weapon if dropped in error would be no more destructive than a regular bomb. It was 'such a freak that even under present conditions the chance of it happening again is **NEGLIGIBLE**—and under new instructions it will be **IMPOSSIBLE**.'⁵⁶ Its readers were less convinced by this argument that the accident proved the safety of the bombs and one correspondent questioned why American officials seemed to be pleased with the incident. One reported that 'I appreciate there are good reasons for and against nuclear weapons and for bases to be established in England, but I do not want them near me. Are we to be condemned to live haunted by the fear of such accidents happening here?'⁵⁷ In spite of these concerns, calls for a re-evaluation of the stationing of nuclear

⁵⁴ Duncan Campbell, *The Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier*, 53.

⁵⁵ Michael H. Maggelet and James C. Oskins, *Broken Arrow: The History of US Nuclear Weapons Accidents* (Lulu.com, 2008), 83.

⁵⁶ 'That Bomb: Answers the Whole Nation is Now Asking', *Daily Express*, 13 March 1958, 5; 'H-Planes: Premier Acts', *Daily Express*, 14 March 1958, 1.

⁵⁷ Letter to *Daily Express* from Mrs M. Cullimore, 18 March 1958, 8.

weapons in Britain were unsuccessful, with the protests limited to a group of thirteen left-wing Labour MPs.

In the same way that there was uncertainty about whether Britons could influence or persuade American servicemen's use of nuclear weapons, there were anxieties that the RAF bases were being used for Cold War espionage without British consent. When an American U-2 plane was shot down over the Soviet Union in May 1960, the possibility that it had been launched from an RAF base caused some concern that British officials and politicians had little control over the activities of the US personnel based in the UK. The *Daily Mail* claimed that the mistake arose 'not from original sin in the Americans but from a lack of subtlety' as they 'too often do things at the wrong time and put themselves in a false position.'⁵⁸ Other commentators were more perturbed because the incident again seemed to reveal the influence of unelected officials on US foreign policy. The *Sunday Times* believed that British criticism of US foreign policy was legitimate because 'we fear that their foreign policy is not under such clear-cut control as our own' with the 'State Department, Defence Department, Treasury, Atomic Energy Commission and the Central Intelligence Agency all seem to have a finger in the pie.'⁵⁹ Some remained convinced that civilian politicians would ultimately be able to prevail on questions of policy. For the *Daily Mirror*, it was important that President Eisenhower 'deal sternly with the idiots who were responsible for sending an American spy-plane over the middle of Russia.' Exonerating politicians of any blame, it claimed that 'American Brasshats and military meddlers have tried to show themselves the bosses of American policy.'⁶⁰

As well as the loss of British sovereignty which some feared would result from the presence of the USAF at RAF bases, the public had to come to terms with the sight of American GIs — a generic term for the servicemen which referred to government issue or general issue — in English towns and cities. It was not only the American military officials in the Pentagon who caused Britons anxiety as the late 1940s marked the return of US GIs who had been

⁵⁸ 'The Summit Plane', *Daily Mail*, 9 May 1960, 1.

⁵⁹ 'Weather on the Atlantic', *Sunday Times*, 29 May 1960, 10.

⁶⁰ 'Sack the Meddlers', *Daily Mirror*, 9 May 1960, 2.

based in Britain during the Second World War. Whereas defence and nuclear issues were somewhat opaque, this human aspect of the American presence was more tangible and provoked varied reactions. As David Reynolds has noted of the wartime influx of the GIs, they ‘became a symbol of American wealth, values and power’ and ‘contributed [...] to longer-term patterns of Americanization.’⁶¹ This continued with the second wave of US servicemen who arrived in Britain during the Berlin Blockade in 1948; their glamorous and opulent lifestyles once again caused admiration and jealousy. Although far left commentators were hostile to this American ‘invasion’ — with *Daily Worker* headlines stating ‘Yanks Go Home’ — attitudes towards the GIs were more complicated.⁶² There were signs that this type of hostility towards the Americans was unpopular with at least some Britons; reports suggested that the GIs and women near to the USAF bases heckled communist speakers and campaigners who objected to the American presence.⁶³ Nonetheless, various aspects of the American soldiers’ lives were the subject of criticism from Britons. Communities surrounding the bases were troubled by the expansion of the facilities which often necessitated alterations to the existing infrastructure whilst the noise of American jets also provoked the annoyance of some nearby residents. Combined with this was the tension caused by the fact that American salaries far exceeded those of British workers and the GIs were protected from prosecution by diplomatic immunity.

Given the popularity of caricatures which emphasised the recklessness or aggression of Pentagon officials, their presence in the UK and ability to act without British authorisation were often apparent in films. Paul Rotha’s 1958 film *Cat and Mouse* played on fears and newspaper headlines of the GIs’ exploits as it portrayed a deserter from the USAF who kidnaps a woman whose diamonds he is trying to steal. GIs were frequently the subject of fictional representations and provided an easy way of casting the Hollywood actors and as such the characterisations of their temperaments were complicated. *Orders to*

⁶¹ David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (New York: Random House, 1995), 445.

⁶² Derek Kartun, *America: Go Home!* (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1951).

⁶³ ‘Housewives Boo Reds’, *Sunday Post*, 24 April 1949, 1; ‘GIs heckle Gallacher’, *Daily Mail*, 30 May 1949, 5.

Kill (1958) depicted young American pilot Gene Summers (Paul Massie) whose indifference about warfare had led to great success during wartime. When assigned the task with conducting espionage and having to murder a French collaborator, though, the USAF pilot becomes traumatised and unable to cope with the physical effects of war. The British entry to the Cannes Film Festival, it attracted complaints from American judges on the panel for ‘being offensive to the United States’ in its portrayal of the Americans.’⁶⁴ In reality, though, the portrayals were diverse and not easily categorised as pro or anti-American. Whilst the on-screen GIs were often involved in criminal behaviour, in films such as *Prize of Gold* (1954) and *The Depraved* (1957) they were aided and encouraged by Britons. In the former, a well-meaning US Army Sergeant participates in a smuggling operation in order to aid a group of orphaned children. Even the films which invoked the caricature of American servicemen as erratic, aggressive or bombastic had subtleties. *The War Lover* (1963) focused on Captain Buzz Rickson (Steve McQueen) who was based in East Anglia during the Second World War. Described by a reviewer as ‘one of those superficial and warped men for whom destruction is an aim in itself,’ Rickson ignores orders to abort a mission to bomb Northern Germany but the successes of his efforts earn admiration as well as criticism.⁶⁵ However, this was not the only stereotype of the US servicemen as the more pacifistic and diffident Ed Bolland is alarmed by Rickson’s unilateralist behaviour. Even this characterisation was unappealing to some Britons, though, as the *Daily Express* described Bolland as ‘a soppy sort of chap who hates war and loves everyone.’⁶⁶ Both attempted to charm a British woman from Cambridge but it was Bolland who was ultimately successful despite her initial attraction to the reckless Rickson.

All of the concerns about the GIs encouraged the idea that Britain was losing its political, military or cultural independence as a result of the US presence in Britain. As early as 1952, the *Economist* noted in a report about the conditions nearby the USAF bases that the “‘coca-colonisation” of many pubs

⁶⁴ Tom Ryall, *Anthony Asquith* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 18.

⁶⁵ ‘1943—and the Flying Fortress’, *Guardian*, 1 July 1963, 9.

⁶⁶ Donald Gomery, ‘Dreadful stuff, but you’ll like McQueen’, *Daily Express*, 20 June 1963, 6.

and restaurants is almost complete.’⁶⁷ For others it was the political effects of the GIs’ presence which were cause for complaint. Journalist Harry Hopkins reported the seeming ubiquity of US servicemen on a tour of England in the early 1950s. Visiting his home county Lancashire and the towns close to the USAF maintenance base at Burtonwood, Hopkins reported that the facility was ‘a complete American enclave inside England: at times one feels that it might almost qualify as a Fiftieth state of America. It has everything, right down to the sickly sweet smell of popcorn.’ Although he described mixed opinions about US servicemen in nearby town Warrington, Hopkins noted one resident’s reply when questioned about the GIs. “American town?” [...] You might as well say American country ... We’ve given up our independence now.”⁶⁸ Others were less convinced of the transformation brought about by the troops’ presence. A *Daily Mirror* journalist visiting Lancashire shortly after the GIs’ arrival suggested that the town had confounded the expectation that it would be ‘Americanised.’ He stated that ‘[a]round Warrington everybody says Fancy That in the purest accents and in the bar parlour there is only one conversation — football and the football pools.’⁶⁹ Investigative reports into attitudes in East Anglia were often at pains to stress that the US soldiers were well received and that Anglo-American relations had withstood the possible tensions caused by their presence. CIA-funded Anglo-American cultural journal *Encounter*’s discussion of the subject in 1960 told readers that the wartime stereotype of the bachelor American serviceman was becoming ‘statistically less significant’ and [f]or better or worse, the day of the swashbuckling, open-handed GI is drawing to a rapid close.’⁷⁰ Others emphasised that there were economic benefits which accrued from the American presence. A *Daily Mirror* correspondent reported that ‘everyone in Suffolk knows that prosperity wears a U.S.A.F. tunic, and few people put up any violent resistance against collecting their share of the gravy.’⁷¹

⁶⁷ ‘The American Bases – II: Dollars without Fraternisation’, *Economist*, 19 April 1952, 145.

⁶⁸ Harry Hopkins, *England is Rich: An Exploration, in Circuits, after Daniel Defoe* (London: George H. Harrap & Co, 1957), 146 and 148.

⁶⁹ George McCarthy, ‘They Didn’t Bring a Wedding Ring’, *Daily Mirror*, 1 December 1948, 2.

⁷⁰ Clancy Sigal, ‘The American GI in Britain’, *Encounter*, February 1960, 30-1.

⁷¹ James Cameron, ‘Much Binding in the Money’, *Daily Mirror*, 31 March 1953, 7.

It was often Britons rather than the GIs who were blamed for the friction. In 1952 GIs from the Burtonwood base were prevented from visiting Manchester after reports of attacks on soldiers and an investigate report in the *Daily Mirror* in 1954 criticised British landlords for increasing rent prices for Americans.⁷² Frequent targets for condemnation from journalists were the young British women who became romantically involved with the servicemen. When the GIs were based in Britain during the Second World War, young women were attracted to the glamour of the visiting servicemen as their luxurious lifestyles contrasted with the British males. Many married Americans but had differing experiences when they settled across the Atlantic after the war.⁷³ The female interest continued with the return of the US troops during the 1950s and there were even official attempts to organise meetings between the Americans and the most ‘decent’ women.⁷⁴ For the British women, the visitors appeared more glamorous and exotic than the local males. A girl in Warrington was typical in asserting that she ‘couldn’t marry an English boy now,’ and a letter published in the *Daily Express* from a female reader in Birmingham exclaimed ‘How we wish they would invade our city and give some competition to our conceited males!’⁷⁵ Not all commentators approved of the attention that British women gave these troops or their pursuit of the GIs. Clifford Davis, a journalist for the *Daily Mirror*, complained that ‘It is shoddy, shameful and shocking. It is sex for sale — a frightening, awful thing of teen age girls, some no more than twelve — waiting nightly in twos and threes.’⁷⁶ His report elicited some supportive responses; one woman from Birmingham claimed that ‘our teenagers of the worst type pursue the Americans at Burtonwood.’⁷⁷

Given the growing sensitivity about the state of the Anglo-American alliance, it is unsurprising that some of the investigative reporting was rebuked

⁷² Paul Cave, ‘Fleeced! How some British landlords squeeze the last cent from the GIs’, *Daily Mirror*, 13 May 1954, 7.

⁷³ Duncan Barrett and Nuala Calvi, *GI Brides: The Wartime Girls who Crossed the Atlantic for Love* (London: HarperCollins, 2013).

⁷⁴ Giora Goodman, ‘“Only the Best British Brides”: Regulating the Relationship between US Servicemen and British Women in the Early Cold War’, *Contemporary European History*, 17, 4 (2008), 483-503.

⁷⁵ Letter to the *Daily Express*, 3 December 1953, 2.

⁷⁶ Clifford Davis, ‘Britain’s Good Name is in Peril’, *Daily Mirror*, 28 April 1949, 2.

⁷⁷ ‘Viewpoint’, *Daily Mirror*, 4 May 1949, 2.

for being overly critical of the troops based in the UK. After an article in the *Picture Post* studied the conditions at US bases at East Anglia, an American sergeant wrote to the journal to complain that its tone did not reflect the warm welcome that the soldiers had received from the local population. He claimed that it presented the troops as 'a bunch of immoral dipsomaniacs' and wondered whether this was 'just more anti-American propaganda, or what the people actually feel behind our backs.'⁷⁸ Ultimately, though, the cliché that Britons regarded their guests as 'over sexed, over paid and over here' captured some of the reasons for suspicion but none of the reasons for the favourable views of the Americans soldiers.

The Bomb

Central to the defence relationship between Britain and the US throughout the long 1950s was the question of nuclear weapons. This had been an important aspect of the wartime co-operation as Anglo-American co-operation had been realised in the Manhattan Project and the explosion of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The McMahon Act ensured that US-UK co-operation lagged behind other aspects of the defence partnership. With this legislation in force until 1958, it was a subject about which attitudes were beforehand informed by perceptions of Britain's independence and the alliance with Washington. The Attlee Government's initial decision to produce atomic weapons was based as much on political considerations as the need to defend the UK. Influencing US policy-makers and the prestige associated with playing a major role in international affairs were central to the rationale behind manufacturing the weapon. Despite the warnings of Cabinet Ministers Hugh Dalton and Stafford Cripps that the costs of the weapon were too large, Ernest Bevin claimed that 'we've got to have this thing over here, whatever it costs. We've got to have a bloody Union Jack on top of it.' The Foreign Secretary's comments revealed his belief that the weapon would confer influence on the British policy-makers and that it would prevent their American counterparts from dismissing British interests. He stated that 'I don't want any other Foreign

⁷⁸ 'Stationed in England', *Picture Post*, 12 July 1952, 8-9.

Secretary of this country to be talked to or at by a Secretary of State in the United States as I have just had in my discussions with Mr Byrnes.’⁷⁹

Bevin’s comments were indicative of an assumption which would remain prevalent amongst Labour politicians until the end of the period: through the possession of nuclear weapons Britain could exercise effective influence over the US. Despite the Atlanticism of many senior Labour politicians, Bevin’s suggestions about the American Secretary of State revealed that there was also willingness to imagine a scenario in which Anglo-American political divergences meant that Britain would need its own bomb. In retirement, Attlee remarked that ‘we had to bear in mind that there was always the possibility of [Washington] withdrawing and becoming isolationist once again’ and, as a result, the ‘manufacture of a British bomb was therefore at this stage essential to our defence.’⁸⁰ Even as the defence relationship became institutionalised with the USAF based in England, there was suspicion amongst Labour leaders that British and American interests might not always coincide or that Washington could retreat from its role in Europe. Future Foreign Secretary Patrick Gordon Walker recorded a meeting in 1957 in which he told Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that ‘we must have the bomb in order not to be a satellite of America’ as [w]e could not trust America to resist Russian attack in Europe.’⁸¹ With Anglo-American disputes in the Far East and the Middle East having caused public strains in the alliance, there were fears that the US could act without British authorisation or approval should it need to protect its interests. The party’s leader Hugh Gaitskell told *Guardian* editor Alastair Hetherington in 1958 that it ‘was very important to have our own weapons both because of influencing policy now and because of a possible American abrogation of the alliance.’ Gaitskell was particularly concerned about the recent threat of Anglo-American disagreement in the Far East over

⁷⁹ Peter Hennessy, *Cabinets and the Bomb* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 91.

⁸⁰ Francis Williams, *A Prime Minister Remembers* (London: Heinemann, 1961), 118.

⁸¹ Robert Pearce (ed), *Patrick Gordon Walker: Political Diaries 1932-1971*, 25 November 1957 (London: The Historian’s Press, 1991), 240.

the Quemoy and Matsu islands and was 'emphatic' that '[w]e must have that influence even if the insurance was small.'⁸²

The Conservative leadership was no less eager to secure the prestige and autonomy which Britain was thought to derive from possession of an independent nuclear deterrent. According to Churchill, it was 'the price we pay to sit at the top table' and Macmillan stated in 1955 that:

Politically, it surrenders our power to influence American policy and then, strategically and tactically it equally deprives us of any influence over the selection of targets and the use of our vital striking forces. The one, therefore weakens our prestige and our influence in the world, and the other might imperil our safety.⁸³

At times, though, it was unclear as to whether the bomb was thought to guarantee the UK global prestige or if policy-makers adopted this approach because such a decision was in keeping with the activities of a 'Great Power.' For example, the Conservative Party's *Weekly News Letter* asserted in March 1956 after left-wing criticism of the government's defence policy that nothing:

can alter the fact that history and geography have combined to make us a great Power, and the heart and centre of a worldwide Empire and Commonwealth. We can't just abdicate our position in the world, and settle down to an easy and comfortable life of neutral irresponsibility.⁸⁴

When commentators spoke of the need for Britain to exercise 'influence,' the concept tended to refer to Britain's relationship with the US rather than any other of the UK's NATO allies or even the Soviet Union. In the *Spectator* in 1957, Peregrine Worsthorne, the Conservative journalist who was amongst the chief analysts of anti-Americanism in Britain, argued that the reason for the continuation of Britain's nuclear programme was 'the right *not* to be dragged along in foolhardy adventures which the United States might decide to

⁸² Note a Meeting with Mr. Gaitskell, 11 November 1958, Alastair Hetherington Papers, C5/1/1-7, MGP.

⁸³ Lawrence Freedman, *Britain and Nuclear Weapons* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1980), 5.

⁸⁴ 'Policy for Peace', *Weekly News Letter*, 10 March 1956, 2.

launch.’⁸⁵ Thus, even those who were worried about the role of ‘anti-American’ attitudes in 1950s Britain could voice concerns about the power and ideas of US officials.

The belief that nuclear weapons enabled Britain to influence Washington was apparent outside of the major political parties and — as calls for the unilateral disarmament of Britain’s hydrogen bomb increased in the late 1950s — this was identified as a major reason for retaining the device. Former Marshall of the Air Force John Slessor argued in 1957 that abandoning the bomb would mean that Britain would ‘gratuitously’ throw away the ‘right to be regarded as a great nation, and all power to influence or control the use of that bomb by her Allies.’ Moreover, British ‘experience, authority, record of courage and resolution in the last two World Wars had won the nation a position in the councils of her Allies in which what she said was bound to have an influence’ and unilateralism would mean that ‘the country would sink to the position of a second- or third-rate power.’⁸⁶ Even those who were sceptical about the need for Britain to possess nuclear weapons utilised arguments which prioritised influence, suggesting that the UK could provide a valuable lead in disarmament talks. On the BBC television programme *Panorama* after the US Government tested the Hydrogen Bomb in 1954, Labour MP John Strachey called for a conference of the US, USSR and Britain, asserting ‘I believe that if the British Government gives the lead then the Russian and American Governments will follow, that they will be forced to follow by their principles.’⁸⁷ The notion that even smaller countries could influence world affairs through possession of the bomb was central to the plot of the 1959 film *The Mouse that Roared*. When the bankrupt, English-speaking European duchy of Grand Fenwick invades the US in the hope of being defeated and securing post-war aid from Washington, its army led by Tully Buscombe (Peter Sellers) is accidentally successful after arriving during an air raid test. Capturing the secret Q-Bomb and its world-renowned inventor gives the small province the

⁸⁵ Letter to the *Spectator* from Peregrine Worsthorpe, 25 January 1957, 112. Emphasis in Original.

⁸⁶ John Slessor, *The Great Deterrent* (London: Cassell, 1957), 189-90.

⁸⁷ *Panorama*, 13 April 1954, Film Number 29, TV Registry Talks Scripts, WAC.

leverage to demand that the US cease producing the weapon which damaged Grand Fenwick's export trade. In possession of a weapon one hundred times more powerful than the hydrogen bomb, the country is courted by the former colonial powers who become eager to forge an alliance but eschews these advances by demanding that the 'little countries of the world' look after the weapon. Though it was interpreted by some as portraying America as 'a nebulous and slightly menacing Big Brother, indistinguishable from Russia,' it was notable that Grand Fenwick gained considerable prestige through the acquisition of the Q Bomb and was able to dictate peace terms to the United States.⁸⁸

Although the two major parties supported the manufacture of a British independent nuclear deterrent before the cancellation of the UK's Blue Streak programme in February 1960, there were sections of Labour and Conservative opinion which objected to the proliferation of the weapons. Macmillan's brand of Keynesian economic policies was anathema to some individuals within his Cabinet who called for reductions in expenditure. Suez, it was argued by Chancellor Peter Thorneycroft and his Treasury ministers who resigned in 1958, had proved the need for financial solvency as Britain was too easily pressured by Washington into altering its policies. Therefore, the UK should not incur the costs of producing the weapon and duplicate the efforts of the American administration.⁸⁹ Economic Secretary for the Treasury Nigel Birch claimed 'I do not think our influence with the US depends on our strength as a nuclear power and '[a]s far as our independence of action in other parts of the world is concerned the one thing really needed is solvency rather than weapons.'⁹⁰ A British nuclear programme, it was claimed, only led to the duplication of resources and manpower which could be pooled by the western powers. Delegates at the Conservative Party conference in the days after the launch of Russian satellite Sputnik in October 1957 argued for the repeal of the McMahon Act preventing the sharing of nuclear intelligence. Economic factors

⁸⁸ Roger Lewis, *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*, 544.

⁸⁹ See Peter Thorneycroft, HC Deb, 23 January 1958, *Hansard*, Volume 580, Column 1295 and also Edward Boyle, 'Why Defence Cuts are Necessary', *Spectator*, 18 January 1957, 72.

⁹⁰ Cited in Andrew Roth, *Enoch Powell: Tory Tribune* (London: Macdonald, 1970), 182.

and the duplication of resources were cited as reasons for co-operation and one speaker stated that ‘America has great potential for undertaking these tasks — greater than we ourselves, and I feel that when backed by our brains and ingenuity the effort will be even greater.’⁹¹ On the left, *Socialist Commentary* similarly editorialised that the ‘great weakness of the Western Alliance is that each nation insists on its sovereignty in military action, yet all the others are irrevocably bound up with the consequences.’⁹² Sputnik encouraged the popular belief that the USSR was ahead in technological and scientific research and in 1958 36 percent of Britons even claimed that the Soviet Union would ‘be strongest 10 years from now’ whilst only 27 percent held this view about America.⁹³

It was this perception of the Western deficit in the Cold War which led to the repeal of the McMahon Act in 1958. For Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, the growing perception of its financial malaise and the need to revive the Anglo-American relationship after Suez informed the growth of rhetoric which stressed the need for ‘interdependence’ in foreign policy. As he put it in a diary entry in August 1958 ‘We had seen the old Empire fade away into a new concept. Independence was over; interdependence must take its place.’⁹⁴ After it became central to Macmillan’s foreign and defence policy agenda and rhetoric, the concept of ‘interdependence’ was used more widely to summarise the Anglo-American relationship⁹⁵ Though it was employed by both the British and American governments, however, Nigel Ashton has noted that this term was fiercely contested at the time. Whilst the British Government regarded the term as referring to a form of partnership in which resources were pooled more consistently, for US officials it more related to the effective central control of Western defence policy from Washington.⁹⁶ Moreover, the calls for Anglo-American interdependence in foreign affairs did not prevent competitiveness

⁹¹ 76th Annual Conference of the Conservative and Unionist Associations, 1956, 45.

⁹² ‘If the West were Wise’, *Socialist Commentary*, January 1958, 3.

⁹³ BIPO Survey 45, June 1958, CCO 180/21/1/2, CPA.

⁹⁴ Peter Catterall (ed), *The Macmillan Diaries: Prime Minister and After*, 9 August 1958, 147.

⁹⁵ Lord Hailsham, *Interdependence: A Policy for Free Peoples* (London: Conservative Political Centre, 1961).

⁹⁶ Nigel Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War: The Irony of Interdependence* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), 152.

between the two countries. By contrast with the triumphalism from many commentators following the tests in 1952 and 1957, the American successes were less extensively reported or celebrated. Indeed, the series of US hydrogen bomb tests in March and April 1954 provoked a reaction against thermonuclear weapons much greater than any response to past British or Russian tests. Even after the Soviet launch of Sputnik in October 1957 exposed the Western deficit on questions of scientific and technological developments, there were signs that Britons were reluctant to accept that the interdependence of Anglo-American efforts. When the Vanguard TV3 — the US's response to Sputnik — failed to launch in December 1957, the British press mocked the project rather than accepting any suggestions about the interdependence of their projects. It was labelled “Kaputnik” and “Phutnik” in the tabloid press and there were reports that an American had been involved in a fight in London after being mocked about the Vanguard project.⁹⁷ In the *Daily Mirror*, “Cassandra” claimed that ‘all this cheerful derision is not a bad thing’ because it ‘will make our American friends hopping mad and when they get hopping mad they will bring all their technical genius into operation again.’⁹⁸ Others were more conscious of the danger that such displays of British derision of the efforts of their chief ally would strengthen the Soviet Union. A cartoon in the *Daily Express* depicted Britons laughing at the headlines about Vanguard whilst Khrushchev laughed louder in the background.⁹⁹

Assumptions about the importance of influencing American policy-making even survived the changes in defence policy and the cancellation of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent. After the cancellation of Blue Streak in 1960 — a project which was proving to be outdated and expensive — and its replacement with American Skybolt missiles, Labour figures called for the purchase of US weaponry for reasons that were similar to those it had advanced in favour of maintaining the weapon: to retain influence on the international stage. At that year's Labour Party conference which defied the party's leadership by voting in favour of unilateral disarmament, Gaitskell told

⁹⁷ ‘Somebody said Sputnik ...’ *Daily Mirror*, 10 December 1957, 19.

⁹⁸ “Cassandra”, ‘The Kiosk Incarnadine’, *Daily Mirror*, 9 December 1957, 2.

⁹⁹ Cartoon by Cummings, *Daily Express*, 9 December 1957, 2.

delegates that Washington would no longer listen to Britain if she were to 'betray' the US by withdrawing from NATO.¹⁰⁰ Atlanticist journal *Socialist Commentary* pointed to the need for Britain to 'reduce the risks of possible American foolhardiness.'¹⁰¹ Rita Hinden asked whether the unilateralists 'want America to be driven into a new isolationism, or else to turn to Germany to fill our leading place in the Western alliance?'¹⁰² In Labour's debates about unilateralism in the early 1960s, influence was again central to the arguments of Atlanticists even though the party had abandoned the aim of manufacturing an independent nuclear deterrent. One referred to the anti-communist policies of Labour Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin when noting that 'This movement of ours still has a tremendous influence in the social democratic parties of Europe and North America. If we accept the principle of unilateral disarmament, we will be treated as having adopted neutralism. It will estrange and embitter our friends.'¹⁰³ One participant claimed that only by decommissioning nuclear weapons 'may we use our influence in the world, which at the moment we are impotent to do because we are tied to the United States and to the NATO bloc'¹⁰⁴ The recent shooting down of an American U2 spy plane over the Soviet Union which was reported to have flown from a British base only added to the fears that Britain lacked influence in Washington. Michael Foot told delegates that:

Even with the bases we are not having a great influence on the Americans now. We were told of one of the most disgraceful incidents in British history, when an American Secretary of State in Paris, at a critical moment in world affairs was willing to give orders about planes flying over these bases without consulting the British Prime Minister about it. We all might have been blown to pieces by that monumental folly.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ *LPACR 1960*, 199.

¹⁰¹ 'The Consequences of Unilateralism', *Socialist Commentary*, September 1960, 3-4.

¹⁰² Rita Hinden, 'The Britain that Might Be', *Socialist Commentary*, October 1960, 3. Emphasis in Original.

¹⁰³ *LPACR 1960*, 189.

¹⁰⁴ *LPACR 1960*, 195.

¹⁰⁵ *LPACR 1960*, 189.

Questions about Britain's ability to influence the direction of the Cold War and the actions of American policy-makers apparent again in 1962 following the abandonment of Skybolt. President Kennedy's Defence Secretary Robert McNamara had pressed for the cancellation of the programme, which had proved to be expensive, unreliable and inaccurate compared with other American strategic missiles. By this point, the Macmillan Government was beset with domestic and international crises, beleaguered after by-election defeats and its unpopularity exacerbated by for example the announcement of pay pauses and the decision to apply for EEC membership. Although a meeting between Macmillan and Eisenhower in Nassau led to Skybolt's replacement with Polaris, a submarine based missile system also acquired from the US, the outcome resulted in some criticism. Macmillan described that the moves 'represent a genuine attempt (wh. the Americans finally accepted) to make a proper contribution to interdependent defence, while retaining the ultimate rights of a sovereign state.' In another sign that Conservative Cabinet ministers reluctantly suppressed their doubts about policy towards the Anglo-American relationship, the Prime Minister noted that the Cabinet 'did not much like it, altho' they backed us up loyally.'¹⁰⁶ Amongst the press which was not inhibited by the pressures of office, there were mixed reactions to the replacement of Skybolt with Polaris. The front-page of the conservative *Daily Mail* argued that Britain was 'Still Independent.' Its correspondent Bruce Rothwell claimed that the 'basic point is that Britain's new Polaris force will be for her own use at any time of grave emergency.'¹⁰⁷ For other observers, the prospect that Britain was inferior to European rivals encouraged support for the policy and the *Sunday Times* editorialised that it was 'important that Britain should not accept a position of nuclear inferiority to France.'¹⁰⁸ Some were unable to avoid the conclusion that this represented a defeat for British diplomacy and the country's world position. A group of Conservative MPs opposed the decision on the grounds that it would compromise British independence. For longstanding critic

¹⁰⁶ Peter Catterall (ed), *The Macmillan Diaries: Prime Minister and After*, 23 December 1962, 528. Emphasis in Original.

¹⁰⁷ Bruce Rothwell, 'Still Independent', *Daily Mail*, 22 December 1962, 1.

¹⁰⁸ 'The Nassau Settlement', *Sunday Times*, 23 December 1962, 6.

of the Anglo-American relationship John Biggs-Davison, it represented a ‘diplomatic Dunkirk’ and he advocated that Britain instead undertake renewed efforts to manufacture nuclear weapon to prevent becoming ‘an American Satellite or the victim of communist blackmail.’¹⁰⁹ The *Sunday Times* editorialised that ‘entire independence as a nuclear Power is for us an illusion’ and claimed that ‘Britain can never be a nuclear Power in the same sense as the [US] or Russia is. Any attempt to become one would be as futile as crippling.’¹¹⁰ In a letter to his constituents, Shadow Defence Secretary George Brown accused the Conservative opponents of encouraging ‘an atmosphere of bitter anti-Americanism,’ a charge also levelled at the 34 Labour MPs who weeks earlier opposed the positioning of a Polaris base in the UK.¹¹¹ Despite Brown’s efforts to exaggerate his rivals’ hostility towards the US, some Labour figures also entertained doubts about the weapon. The party’s defence specialist later noted that it was an ‘idiotic alternative [...] to buy Skybolt from the United States upon whom, already, we relied for developing defence measures like the Ballistic Early Warning System.’ Its replacement Polaris — granted to Britain in December 1962 — was according to Wigg ‘targeted to suit NATO, that is American, interests.’¹¹² Thus, the question of British independence from the US was an important consideration in debates about nuclear policy which existed alongside the growing imperatives for Cold War Anglo-American co-operation.

Protest, Unilateralism and anti-Americanism

Whilst both of Britain’s major political parties supported the maintenance of nuclear weapons, there were varied attitudes amongst the wider public towards this aspect of the Anglo-American relationship. Gerard de Groot has claimed that the British public’s sense of patriotism and eagerness to maintain global prestige on the international stage resulted in broad support for government policies.¹¹³ However, there were prominent signs of opposition to the consensus

¹⁰⁹ ‘Mr. Thorneycroft to Meet Tory Polaris Critics’, *Financial Times*, 28 December 1962, 9.

¹¹⁰ ‘Behind the Nassau Pact’, *Sunday Times*, 30 December 1962, 6.

¹¹¹ James Margach, ‘“Tories hysterical over Polaris”—George Brown’, *Sunday Times*, 30 December 1962, 9; ‘34 vote against Polaris base’, *The Times*, 13 December 1962, 16.

¹¹² Lord Wigg, *George Wigg* (London: Michael Joseph, 1972), 209 and 211.

¹¹³ Gerard de Groot, *The Bomb: A Life* (London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 32.

on this subject which often incorporated criticism of Washington or particular American foreign policy-makers. Undoubtedly, significant sections of the British population were motivated to endorse the manufacture of the bomb by the nationalistic impulses apparent in the press after the nuclear weapons tests in 1952 and 1957. Surveys conducted at several points in the late 1950s showed that a majority of Britons were reluctant to relinquish the weapon and voiced support for the production of a British hydrogen bomb. In March 1955, 54 percent agreed that Britain should make the device whilst only 32 percent opposed its manufacture.¹¹⁴ Despite the increased calls for the unilateralism of British weapons in the late 1950s, in February 1958, 58 percent expressed their disapproval at such a policy.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, there was also evidence of concern about certain aspects relating to the bomb, particularly the testing of the device. After American hydrogen bomb tests in 1954 had harmed a group of Japanese fishermen who were situated outside of the exclusion zone, there were ethical concerns of the effect of explosions and the effects of the presence of Strontium 90 in the environment. Calls for the cessation of nuclear testing were supported by a majority of the public as 48 per cent claimed they wanted 'to stop H-tests for all time.'¹¹⁶ Furthermore, three years earlier 53 percent of the public had supported the idea that Britain should 'devote atomic energy solely to peaceful uses as France is doing.'¹¹⁷

Most of the opposition to Britain's possession of nuclear weapons was co-ordinated by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), a group of mainly left-wing, middle class intellectuals which derived support from the trade union movement and left-wing of the Labour Party. CND attracted significant attention with its prominent marches to Aldermaston and demonstrations in Trafalgar Square but scepticism about nuclear weapons pre-dated its foundation in 1957. The series of American hydrogen bomb tests which began in March 1954 provoked complaints amongst the left-wing activists and spokesmen who were already sceptical about the Anglo-American alliance or critical of

¹¹⁴ BIPO Survey 427, March 1955, CCO 180/21/1/1, CPA.

¹¹⁵ BIPO Survey 42, February 1958, CCO 180/21/1/2, CPA.

¹¹⁶ BIPO Survey 53, November 1958, CCO 180/21/1/2, CPA.

¹¹⁷ BIPO Survey 44, May 1955, CCO 180/21/1/1, CPA.

particular aspects of US policy. On the left, there were worries that this proliferation of nuclear weapons could lead to a nuclear war in which Britain was vulnerable. The *Daily Mirror* described it as the 'Horror Bomb' and criticised Churchill for having been uninformed about the American tests whilst a Keep Left Group resolution called the recent experiments a 'grave threat to civilisation' and called for meetings between the 'Big Three.'¹¹⁸ Labour journal *Forward* even claimed after the American test that:

Britain is no longer a Great Power, and quite incapable of starting a world war (even if this was desirable!) on her own initiative. Dropping a British-made, or, for that matter, an American hydrogen bomb from this country would be our passport to extinction—for no country in the world is more vulnerable to an H-bomb attack than Britain.¹¹⁹

The American tests attracted much greater controversy than had those of the Soviet Union or Britain and, for some commentators, the resulting objections did not amount to reasonable objections but were evidence of the biases of the critics. One Conservative Party publication advanced a view which would become common as protests about nuclear weapons grew throughout the 1950s: because it seemed to have criticisms of Soviet testing it was apparent that 'Far too often elements in the Labour Party give way to an anti-Americanism which destroys all objectivity.'¹²⁰

By the time of CND's formation, the left-wing critics of Britain's Atlanticism and Washington's international policies were well-versed in defending themselves against charges of anti-Americanism. CND often dismissed such allegations but, in common with the Labour left, struggled to dissociate itself from this attitude. After American tests of nuclear weapons in 1962, its journal *Sanity* claimed that 'day and night since the United States of America resumed nuclear tests, members of [CND] have kept up a vigil of protest outside the American Embassy in London. If the Soviet Union holds another series of tests, another vigil of protest will be maintained outside the

¹¹⁸ 'Twilight of a Giant', *Daily Mirror*, 1 April 1954, 2; See untitled resolution in Keep Left Papers, [n.d] LP/RICH/2/3/5, LHASC

¹¹⁹ 'H-Bomb: Will You Feel Safer', *Forward*, 8 May 1954, 1.

¹²⁰ Conservative Party Weekend Talking Point No 95, 10 April 1954, 1.

Soviet Embassy.’¹²¹ Despite this rhetoric from the leadership, the movement undoubtedly contained figures whose criticism of the US was motivated by more than simply opposition to the proliferation of nuclear weapons or its military presence in Britain. Although the minutes of CND’s executive committee recorded little evidence of wider objections to US politics or culture, these sentiments were often overt in the activities of the protestors. The songs of the Aldermaston marchers focused more on Washington than Moscow, imagining an attack instigated by a rogue General and complaining about the social and economic effects of the American bases. ‘The Button Pusher’ in the Pentagon whose actions threatened the whole of humanity was ‘More vicious than Adolf Hitler’ and ready to instigate war with ‘a wink and nod from Kennedy.’¹²²

Although the movement’s leaders claimed to be equally opposed to the nuclear proliferation of both superpowers, much of its energy was focused on criticising the US. With American bases situated on British territory, they were a natural target for protests but CND activists only encouraged the conclusion that it was biased against the USA with the claim that it would be preferable for Britain to be a Soviet satellite than obliterated in a nuclear war.¹²³ Several works of fiction written by campaigners portrayed Americans as the major threat to world peace. In Peter George’s *Two Hours to Doom* (1958) an insane Pentagon General unilaterally launches an attack on the USSR. The US and Soviet officials manage to avert disaster but the fictional President is prepared to allow the destruction of a major US city in exchange for any damage caused by the American attack. The danger posed by the US’s military-industrial complex was central to John Brunner’s *The Brink* (1958) in which the accidental crash-landing of a Soviet satellite in Nebraska provokes an automatic American retaliatory nuclear response which is only averted by Colonel Ben Goldwater. Instead of being proclaimed a hero for having averted a nuclear war,

¹²¹ Jodi Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain: Britishness, ‘Race’ and the Radical Left in the 1960s* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013), 43. See also 41-6. For other defences against the charge of anti-Americanism by unilateralists see Frank Cousins, *TUC Report 1960*, 397.

¹²² Enoch Kent, ‘The Button Pusher’, Songs Box 2, Working Class Movement Library, Salford (WCML).

¹²³ Philip Toynbee, *The Fearful Choice* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1958).

Goldwater and the journalist who attempt to expose the cover-up are silenced by the American establishment. Broadcast on BBC television in 1959, Marghanita Laski's *The Offshore Island* was controversial enough to provoke public complaints to the BBC, calls for the 'anti-American' play to be banned and warnings from Conservative MPs about its effects on the Anglo-American alliance.¹²⁴ Set several years after a nuclear war had destroyed the majority of Western Europe, the play focused on a family which had managed to survive the radioactive fall-out and lived off the land. This English rural idyll was disturbed by the arrival of a group of American servicemen who demand that the family leave as the area is scheduled to be bombed and 'neutralised' by the still warring superpowers. Faced with resistance from the English family, an American Captain shoots a teenage boy and a Sergeant reported that 'You've got to have an enemy because that's the condition of mankind' and that 'Peace corrupts you, makes you soft, makes a fool of you.'¹²⁵ Rather than acquiescing in their evacuation to America before their home is destroyed, the English family opts to remain, an action which inferred that obliteration was preferable to life in a US concentration camp for contaminated persons.

Whilst many CND supporters directed greater criticism at the US than the USSR, it would be mistaken to dismiss all of its activists or opponents of nuclear proliferation as anti-American. There were a host of reasons for doubts about the manufacture of these weapons which did not relate to America as such, including the fears that such technology could damage the environment or lead to a nuclear apocalypse. One 38 year-old housewife's complaints about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not solely targeted at Washington as she described that it was 'a blot on my honour as an English woman. It was devilish, and not befitting for the white races, to use such a weapon, in warfare.'¹²⁶ Those involved with CND had varied motives but also differing perceptions of the Cold War and both superpowers which evolved over the

¹²⁴ Nancy Spain, 'The Night When the BBC Grew Up', *Daily Express*, 15 April 1959, 9. Sir John Crowder, House of Commons Written Questions, *Hansard*, 29 April 1959, Volume 604, Column 121W; Minutes of the Conservative Foreign Affairs Committee, 22 April 1959, CRD 2/34/3, CPA.

¹²⁵ Marghanita Laski, *The Offshore Island* (London: Cresset, 1959), 57-8.

¹²⁶ DR 1865, reply to August 1950 Directive, MOA.

course of the 1950s. For example, Bertrand Russell had been outspoken in his anti-communist since the 1920s whilst also contemptuous of US capitalism but nonetheless called in the 1940s for America to assert world leadership. As the Cold War developed before the Korean War, the philosopher's opinions corresponded with the majority opinions in Britain and he even asserted that 'America, in my opinion, has proved to be the best of the Powers since 1945.'¹²⁷ However, his overriding aim to prevent nuclear war as well as the policies of the Eisenhower administration at home and abroad encouraged him to regard the US as the major threat to world peace by the mid-1950s. For others, the stance was at times more redolent of Cold War neutralism than pathological hostility towards American aims. Historian and prominent CND supporter A. J. P. Taylor said in 1948 that 'I know what *I'm* for – for a single humanity, not for British culture, not American culture, not Soviet culture, but for a single human culture.' If this were not possible, Taylor argued for the development of a European bloc 'that is neither Communist nor American.'¹²⁸ This belief that an alternative existed to the state of global tension and superpower rivalry was common even though CND included many left-wing activists and intellectuals whose sympathies were said to be with the USSR. After visiting both Russia and America in the early 1960s, even the former communist Mervyn Jones concluded that there was no need for Britons to 'envy' either superpower as he claimed that 'theirs is not the way to live; we can do better.'¹²⁹

Whilst Washington's control of RAF bases was a major target for protests about nuclear weapons, CND activists even shared some assumptions with their rivals who were Atlanticist or advocated multilateral disarmament. The campaign's calls for unilateralism were based on the idea that it could convince world opinion about the need to decommission nuclear weapons – ideas which were redolent of the claim that Britain needed to retain its weapons to influence Washington. As Stephen King-Hall put it in his 1958 plea for unilateralism,

¹²⁷ Barry Feinberg and Ronald Kasrils, *Bertrand Russell's America 1945-1970* (Boston: South End Press, 1983), 13.

¹²⁸ Kathleen Burk, *Troublemaker: The Life and History of A. J. P. Taylor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 193-4.

¹²⁹ Mervyn Jones, *Big Two: Life in America and Russia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962), 308.

Britons were ‘a considerable people whose general influence on human history during the past 500 years has been more significant than that of any other national group.’ Invoking John Milton’s dictum which was oft-cited by campaigners (‘Let not England forget her precedence in teaching the nations how to live’) King-Hall argued that Britain was in the best position to end the political deadlock between the superpowers.¹³⁰ Moreover, the protestors were not as unequivocally opposed to all aspects of the US as their critics suggested. Jazz music provided the soundtrack to the protest marches to Aldermaston and Adrian Mitchell, a writer involved with CND recalled being influenced by American films such as *Dr Strangelove* and *Fail Safe* — both of which were inspired by Brunner’s *The Brink* — and US writers such as Kurt Vonnegut, Allen Ginsburg and Denise Levertov.¹³¹ Some Americans played an active role in CND’s protests; in Trafalgar Square in 1958, African-American civil rights activist Bayard Rustin told campaigners that there were ‘thousands of people in United States prepared to stand behind this’ and Dulles, he noted, ‘does not speak for the best of the United States.’¹³² It was not only the arguments of the far left to which these individuals and activists were exposed; American official George Kennan attended CND’s first meeting and his 1957 Reith Lectures helped to stimulate debate about British defence policy and unilateralism. The Pentagon was eager to invite burgeoning politicians for defence lectures with senior military figures. Even some past critics of the alliance were invited on these tours.¹³³ Richard Crossman’s report on one such trip in the *New Statesman* in 1958 demonstrated the wariness some participants in these visits felt about the Pentagon and American Generals. Remembering a speech in Washington by General Nathan Twining which expressed a desire to circumvent the limitations imposed by political leaders, the Labour MP

¹³⁰ Stephen King-Hall, *Defence in the Nuclear Age* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1958), 222-3. He also described Marshall Aid as a ‘extraordinary and novel behaviour by a sovereign state has not been sufficiently appreciated by the beneficiaries who have been (and still are) constantly irritated by the short-term tactical political errors of the State Department.’ *Ibid*, 50.

¹³¹ John Minnion and John Bolsover, *The CND Story: The first 25 years of CND in the words of the people involved* (London: Allison and Busby, 1983), 120-1.

¹³² Transcript of shorthand notes taken by P. S. Eastgate at a demonstration held in Trafalgar Square of Friday, 4.4.1958 under the auspices of the Aldermaston March Committee, HO 325/149, TNA

¹³³ CND activist Mervyn Jones’s 1962 book *The Big Two* was partly based on his experiences of the US during one such trip.

described visiting the Lincoln Memorial and questioned how the former President would have responded ‘if one of his subordinates had talked in that way?’ Overlooking the longstanding role played by the American military and the fact that former General Dwight Eisenhower occupied the White House, he criticised ‘the breed of politicians who have permitted policy to be subordinated to strategy’ and who had failed to restrain the Pentagon.¹³⁴

In this, CND and the critics of aspects of the Anglo-American defence relationship had some habits in common with their opponents. The shared English language and close US-UK defence ties ensured that American writing and theorising about defence policy was more relevant and accessible than was the case for any other NATO ally. Kennan, Vannevar Bush and Paul Nitze or even American military personnel and politicians such as Dulles and General Matthew Ridgway were often discussed in books published about British policy.¹³⁵ The group of military, defence and foreign policy specialists who called for the development of tactical nuclear weapons and the reform of NATO were also inspired by arguments expressed across the Atlantic. For these critics who disapproved of the results of the 1957 Defence Review, in which conscription was abolished in favour of reliance on Britain’s nuclear deterrent, American lessons were important. Future American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (1958) attracted attention in Britain and influenced the growth of a group of intellectuals, politicians and journalists who called for the reform of NATO and the use of tactical atomic weapons. Advancements in nuclear technology and the destructive capacity of hydrogen weaponry led to questions about whether all wars needed to be total and the possibility of pursuing limited warfare to resist Soviet aggression was mooted. The Institute of Strategic Studies was created by individuals who were influenced by the work of American writers such as Bernard Brodie, Albert Wohlstetter, Thomas Schelling and Hermann Kahn. Labour defence specialist

¹³⁴ Richard Crossman, ‘Polemopolitics’, *New Statesman*, 2 May 1959, 613-4. Shadow Defence Secretary George Brown remembered receiving a grant for a trip to the US from the American Congressional Trust and spent the time visiting NATO defence installations. He noted that the funding of the tour was ‘among the most generous and far-sighted benefits that any country could provide.’ George Brown, *In My Way*, 214.

¹³⁵ For example see P. M. S. Blackett, *Atomic Weapons and East-West Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), *passim*.

Denis Healey, who was also involved with the Institute of Strategic Studies which debated these questions, described this as the 'new breed of defence intellectual' which was then emerging on both sides of the Atlantic.¹³⁶ In a political culture in which it was becoming routine to look across the Atlantic for ideas or inspiration from the US, it is not surprising that critics of the 'special relationship' worked with their American counterparts to hone their arguments. Though there was conflict in Britain over defence and nuclear policy, the willingness to learn from American writers on this subject was something which united commentators, politicians and officials.

Conclusions

As the Anglo-American defence relationship developed during the long 1950s, it was a subject which epitomised concerns about British dependence on or subservience to Washington and the question of the extent to which policy-makers were able to influence their American counterparts. Within the Western defence arrangements, it was the United States which had the largest role and Britons had to cope with the reality of being dependent on decisions made by officials in the Pentagon. The presence of US forces at British RAF bases, the growing dependence on American policy-makers for the UK's nuclear deterrent and Britain's position within NATO all prompted questions as to whether this amounted to dependence on Washington. Nonetheless, most were agreed that Britain retained the capacity to influence the direction of American policy regardless of their positions within the fierce conflicts over defence and nuclear matters. The Generals and Admirals whose capacity to instigate a third world war were a continual source of anxiety but there was typically confidence that their demands could be mitigated by the steadying influence of British politicians. The political and diplomatic links between the two countries as well as the shared English language meant that ideas about defence could be easily transferred to Britain. Such was the focus on debates in the US that even the opponents of Britain's nuclear deterrent in CND who often criticised the US or called for an end to the transatlantic defence partnership utilised ideas from

¹³⁶ Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life*, 240.

across the Atlantic. Although defence questions were somewhat rarefied or opaque, other issues which affected British views of America were more tangible and relevant to the wider population. Chapter Five assesses a subject which was more relevant to everyday life than defence policy and nuclear weapons: British perceptions of American culture and reactions to its export to the UK. Warnings about the ‘Americanisation’ of British culture were common in response to the introduction of a range of products including commercial television, rock ‘n’ roll, and bowling alleys. It assesses the unique role that the US because of its reputation as the home of modernity played in British debates about cultural change.

Chapter Five

The American Future

In June 1956, a series of reports in the *Sunday Times* described the existence of a new sales method being utilised across the Atlantic. Correspondent William Foster told readers about a recent experiment in ‘subliminal’ or ‘sub-conscious’ advertising at a New Jersey cinema; the displaying of an ice cream commercial for a fraction of a second was said to have led to a 60 per cent increase in demand for the product. For Foster, this was a ‘selling technique straight from George Orwell’s “1984”’ and the anxieties about this type of advertisement neared moral panic by the end of the decade.¹ Although the details about the New Jersey tests were vague and even proved to be fraudulent several years later, the fear grew that companies or politicians could manipulate the opinions and tastes of the British public.² BBC television’s *A Question of Science* tested subliminal messaging on its viewers, there were questions in the House of Commons about whether Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was using such methods in political campaigns, and the 1962 committee on broadcasting called for legislation restricting its use. As E. S. Turner, a sceptic about advertising, noted in 1965, ‘it is quite clear that the threat of the subliminal technique ‘was blown up into an absurd boggy.’³

The worries about subliminal advertising in the late 1950s were not the first or last occasion during which the prospect of an import from the United States caused anxiety. In the two decades after 1945, various other cultural products, trends and habits were met with suspicion as it was feared that their export to Britain could undermine its traditional culture. It was a cliché to suggest what happened in America would inevitably occur five years later in Britain and the

¹ ‘Sales through the Sub-Conscious’, *Sunday Times*, 10 June 1956, 1. *The Richardson Story*, a 1951 novel by left wing journalist Francis Williams had imagined the creation of such an advertising technique by a Broad Street company, with the creation becoming a Cold War tool rivaling nuclear weapons in significance.

² Most subsequent reports — including those by William Foster — described the test as having flashed the words ‘Eat Popcorn’ and Aldous Huxley’s critical account of advertising described it as increasing sales by only 50 per cent. William Foster, ‘U.S. TV to Try ‘Subliminal’, *Sunday Times*, 16 February 1958, 17; Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited*, 103-4. Huxley was nonetheless fairly sceptical about the findings of the study.

³ E. S. Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising* (London: Penguin, 1965 [1952]), 289.

apparent Americanisation of Britain was a topic for much debate. Hollywood films, American television programmes and youth culture symbolised by “rock ‘n’ roll” music were all popular with sections of the public but nonetheless attracted elite criticism. Chapter Five examines British perceptions of US culture in the long 1950s and investigates debates about the country’s seemingly growing influence in Britain. This was a period when comparisons with American culture were unavoidable. The affluence and consumerism provided a marked contrast with the living standards of Western Europe and the intensification of the cultural Cold War with the USSR meant that Washington was eager to promote its successes and innovations. This chapter examines these debates and constructions of US culture to identify some of the underlying perceptions of America that were commonly espoused in Britain’s political culture. As it will demonstrate, the process of cultural exchange was complicated, eliciting various reactions in Britain. Impressions of American culture and responses to its importation to the UK were conditioned as much by expectations of the US as any physical experience of the country. Although there was significant condescension and opposition about what was regarded as an ersatz, vulgar or ostentatious culture, this co-existed with enthusiasm for American culture. Concepts such as Americanisation and anti-Americanism risk simplifying the complicated processes of cultural transfer and exchange; America was a model widely used as Britons attempted to negotiate and understand modernity. As will be demonstrated, the US was invoked by both critics and sympathisers to justify their reactions to complicated changes to British culture and lifestyles.

‘Americanisation’

The British interest in American culture was well established by the 1950s. Despite US ‘isolationism’ before the Second World War, the country elicited various and visceral reactions even before the Declaration of Independence. The promise of the “New World” which had inspired the initial Atlantic exploration persisted for centuries afterwards even whilst many in Europe regarded the

country as barren, uncivilised or savage.⁴ Unlike any other nation, America represented far more than its geographical boundaries as it was a collection of metaphors and symbols, serving as a blank canvas for European fantasies and anxieties. By the 1950s, only around 8 percent of Britons had visited America but by the middle of this point the prevalence of US cultural exports in Europe made the country seem tangible to British observers.⁵ Because American visits were rare, perceptions of the country's culture were governed by longstanding tropes as well as the products from the US which were increasingly available in Britain. In the inter-war period, the UK became Hollywood's largest export market, jazz music was enjoyed by some sections of the public, and American businesses traded in British towns and cities. The result — particularly as this process intensified after the Second World War — was that Britons had more images of America on which to draw when forming perceptions of the country and the surfeit of US products and representations encouraged feelings of familiarity with its life and culture. Writing about Hollywood's influence in 1951, writer J. E. Morpurgo described:

The towering New York sky-line, the white clapboard houses of New England, the Golden Gate, the magnificence of the Rockies; these pictures have become, through cinematic repetition, part of the Englishman's pictorial equipment, and with Hollywood's aid he has developed an intimate acquaintance with such peculiarly American institutions as the drugstore, the tourist-cabin, the fraternity house and the railroad depot.⁶

Although these cultural exports played a large role in informing and framing British views about the US, their presence was controversial and their reception mixed. Whilst millions of Britons regularly watched US films or shopped in Woolworths, since the 1920s there had been warnings about the effect of these

⁴ For more on the contrasting European constructions of America before the twentieth century see Richard Pells, *Not Like Us*, 1-36; Rob Kroes, *If You've Seen One, You've Seen the Mall* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 1-42.

⁵ A Gallup poll conducted in 1937 revealed that 8 per cent had made such trips, a figure which was unchanged when the survey was repeated in 1979. Robert M. Worcester, *British Public Opinion: A Guide to the History and Methodology of Political Opinion* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 4.

⁶ J. E. Morpurgo, 'Hollywood: America's Voice', in Bertrand Russell et al, *The Impact of America on European Culture* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1951), 51-2.

American items and businesses on British culture. The *Daily Express* claimed in 1927 that cinema-goers ‘talk America, think America, dream America’ with the result being ‘several million people, mostly women, who, to all intents and purposes, are temporary American citizens.’⁷ Although these fears receded when US investment in Britain decreased as a result of the Depression, America’s post-war economic expansion led to renewed claims of cultural imperialism by the 1950s. Particularly on the British left, the growing cultural and economic influence of the US represented an ‘American invasion’ which threatened indigenous British ways of life and habits.⁸ In his seminal 1957 book *The Uses of Literacy*, Richard Hoggart lamented the erosion of traditional working-class cultures by American popular music, television programmes or fashion imported to Britain. Describing the milk bars and juke boxes which populated British towns and cities, the cultural theorist described their inhabitants as men with ‘drape-suits, picture ties and an American slouch’ who lived ‘in a myth-world compounded of a few simple elements which they take to be those of American life.’⁹ The anti-capitalism which remained prevalent on the left encouraged its suspicion of what was regarded as a mechanised, commercial lifestyle prevalent in the US. In left-wing journal *Tribune*, symbols of the international success of US capitalism such as Coca-Cola were frequent targets for criticism and in 1952 Labour MP Jennie Lee described the US as evidence that capitalism had ‘lost its sanctions.’ It was, she told readers, a country as a ‘world of permanent central heating and artificial light ... [which] reeks of rye whiskey and dope, its music is the jukebox syncopated with gunshots.’¹⁰

Critics bemoaned what they regarded as the Americanisation of British culture. For left-wing spokesmen, it was a source of frustration because the increased living standards experienced by the American public had been achieved under the capitalist system they opposed. In 1952, ‘Bevanite’ MP Barbara Castle argued that ‘We are not anti-American. We are anti-capitalist —

⁷ David Dimbleby and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart*, 106.

⁸ Francis Williams, *The American Invasion*.

⁹ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Pelican, 1976 [1957]), 248.

¹⁰ Jennie Lee, ‘As I Please ...’ *Tribune*, 19 December 1952, 2.

or used to be.’¹¹ Consequently, some left-wing officials and politicians were quick to note the deficiencies in this culture which challenged their conviction that the working class could achieve the best improvements under a socialist economic system. At the Labour Party conference in 1960, Harold Wilson asserted that ‘America perhaps is rich enough to be able to afford this Americanised society; we cannot’ and warned that Britain would ‘go on lagging behind others unless we have central planning and direction of our economic life.’¹² The complaints motivated by suspicion at the influence of big business on American cultural production were augmented by the nationalistic belief in the superiority of British habits and tastes. In 1951, writer Harold Nicolson warned against the calls for Federal Union by suggesting that:

The time may come when we have all been so *gleichgeschaltet* by American culture that we shall respond automatically to the same stimulus. But at the present moment, as is noticeable, we do not respond to the same stimulus. It is evident that in any Federal Union, whatever institutional devices might be adopted, the voice of America would be dominant. It will take many generations before the British citizen responds with complete automatism to the voice of America.¹³

Evelyn Waugh’s 1948 novel *The Loved One* reflected these doubts about aspects of the US’s culture by satirising Hollywood social life as well as the American funeral industry.¹⁴ Waugh’s upper-class criticisms of American culture often found expression in right-wing publications as writers and correspondents protested about US customs replacing what they perceived as the British way of life. A letter published in conservative journal *John Bull* in 1958 demonstrated that such concerns often concerned minor aspects of British life as it asked ‘What has happened to the old British habit of lovers walking arm-in-arm? It seems to have completely died out — and given place to that frightful American custom of pulling the girl along by the fingertips.’¹⁵

¹¹ Quoted in Leon Epstein, *Britain – Uneasy Ally*, 101.

¹² *LPACR 1960*, 150.

¹³ Harold Nicolson, ‘Marginal Column’, *Spectator*, 27 April 1951, 552.

¹⁴ Evelyn Waugh, *The Loved One: An Anglo-American Tragedy* (London: Penguin, 2000 [1948]).

¹⁵ Letter from P. J. Smith, *John Bull*, 23 August 1958, 3.

Not only was American culture regarded as inferior by sections of the British elite; its increased prevalence provoked an extended debate about the ‘Americanisation’ of the UK. It was particularly left-wing figures that adopted such a view and Francis Williams argued in 1962 that

Sometimes it hits you as soon as you arrive in a country—you see it in the stores and office blocks, in the theatres and apartment houses, in the way people talk and dress and behave and the things they read. Sometimes you need to have known a country years before to be aware of the changes Americanisation has wrought. But if you travel about the world a good deal you cannot but be aware of it in some shape or form almost wherever you go.¹⁶

Although this type of thesis was common given the extent of American cultural exports to Britain, it was controversial. Even a review in the left-wing *New Statesman* treated Williams’s thesis with some suspicion as writer John Gross questioned ‘How far are American methods modified by British institutions, and will an American practice necessarily have the same social consequences here as it does at home?’ Moreover, he asked ‘When is Americanization the result of direct influence, and when of parallel development?’¹⁷

As this question implied, anxieties about Americanisation were not about America per se but related to wider concerns about the US version of modernity based on technological innovation, consumerism, and mass culture. It became a cliché to suggest that the US was five years ahead of the UK but the two countries were experiencing similar challenges after 1945. Rather than being an example of deliberate US cultural imperialism, this was arguably an example of the fact that the two countries and Western democracies more generally were undergoing similar changes as they adjusted from industrial to service industries and from production to consumption. As Britons attempted to come to terms with these issues, best-selling American books such as *The Lonely Crowd*, *The Organization Man*, *The Hidden Persuaders* and *The Affluent Society* were all popular in the UK. They all informed the debate about US culture and offered ideas which augmented the critique of American culture and

¹⁶ Francis Williams, *The American Invasion*, 4.

¹⁷ John Gross, ‘American Ways’, *New Statesman*, 5 January 1962, 714.

shaped perceptions of life across the Atlantic. Others claimed that these worries about 'Americanisation' were more related to the British engagement with modernity. American writer Mary McCarthy posited that this was the cause of British objections to the US after encountering some prejudice on a visit to Britain in 1954. She reported on BBC radio that:

The western world's fear of America is simply a localisation of the universal fear of the future. If we Americans, tourists, in London are looked upon with misgiving, it is because we seem to have come, bag and baggage and camera, from the home of that unimaginable tomorrow.¹⁸

According to H. G. Nicholas, Europeans 'cannot fail to see in America more than America, to see there some at least of the portents of our own future.' He pointed out that 'whether it is Coca-cola, mass technology, the open society, a lost innocence, a more perfect union, a wave of the future rolls towards the shores of Europe as certainly as in earlier centuries it rolled from Europe to North America.'¹⁹ Furthermore, the critics did not regard American life as homogeneous and the use of the term Americanisation simplified their ideas, distracting from the fact that many simply viewed the US as the epitome of a commercialised culture. In advancing these arguments, the British sceptics about the American version of modernity were aided by the ideas of US writers and intellectuals. Amongst the left-wing critics, there was a consistent belief that Britain was not being exposed to the best of US life, culture and ideas but a portrait of the country dominated by big business. Raymond Williams, who like Hoggart was associated with the new left which emerged out of divisions on the far left in the 1950s, argued that in some ways 'we are culturally an American colony' but this was 'pseudo-American' as 'it is not the best American culture that we are getting, and the import and imitation of the worst has been done, again and again, by some of our own people.'²⁰ For *Tribune* journalist Geoffrey Wagner, the majority of Americans were 'being imposed upon by those

¹⁸ Mary McCarthy, 'Thoughts of an American in England', *The Listener*, 17 June 1954, 1041.

¹⁹ H. G. Nicholas, 'The Search for Americanism', 10 April 1958, BBC Third Programme, T374, RSL, WAC.

²⁰ Raymond Williams, *Communications* (London: Penguin, 1976 [1962]), 115.

responsible for the production of drivel’ as ‘small groups, certain individuals become able to exploit the good nature in the masses at large to their own financial advantage.’²¹

Affluence

Americanisation has been a popular way for conceiving Europe’s engagement with US culture. One recent account discussed the ‘Americanization of everywhere’ and argued that ‘America won the world by winning it over, sometimes with candy bars and jeans, mostly with images and sounds’ with Europeans being ‘captivated rather than conquered — consensually Americanised.’²² On various political, social and cultural questions during the 1950s, the US’s influence in Britain was significant but the population and elites responded in various ways and reactions were conditioned by political views, age, gender and social class. One of the more obvious signs of the cultural differences between the two countries was the relatively high standard of living enjoyed by the American public. American social and economic conditions presented a marked contrast with those apparent in the British towns and cities which still bore the physical scars of the Blitz as reconstruction was slow. Despite the Conservative Government policy of building 300,000 council houses in 1953, half a million people continued to live in slum housing. They were, according to the then Housing Minister Harold Macmillan, ‘living in cramped, dark, rotten houses with no water, sometimes no lavatories, no proper ventilation and no hope of rescue.’²³ Modern conveniences which were common amongst the American public such as refrigerators, washing machines and televisions were not readily available in Britain.

Although these high living standards and conveniences attracted admiration amongst some Britons, there were commentators and members of the public who regarded the US’s rising living standards as being evidence of its vulgar or materialistic nature. Respondents to M-O Directives often included the latter

²¹ Geoffrey Wagner, *Parade of Pleasure: A Study of Popular Iconography in the USA* (London: Derek Verschoyle, 1954), 13.

²² Peter Conrad, *How the World Was Won: The Americanization of Everywhere* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2014), 326.

²³ David Kynaston, *Family Britain: 1951-57*, 338.

characterisation in their assessments of the US and its population, with the inference being that Britons were less guilty of these traits. When the organisation surveyed the public on their views about Americans in 1950, 'Materialist' was amongst the most common responses as 15 per cent of participants held this view of the US.²⁴ A 22 year-old typist reported 'I find their way of living too materialistic and shallow' whilst 21 year-old student noted that Americans 'are a bit late in waking up to the fact that their supremacy in world affairs is only in material things.'²⁵

It was common for British observers to find faults with the US's abundance or to find fault with its society and level of prosperity. Often this focused on the superficial nature of American life as commentators stressed that Britain possessed features which were superior to the high living standards across the Atlantic. Observing the high American wages after a visit in 1957, Labour MP George Brown reported that 'we still know much more about living, I feel.'²⁶ This reasoning was frequently apparent when Britons discussed shopping in the US. The supermarket was a symbol of capitalist success as these stores provided a vast array of packaged goods with large parking facilities for customers' cars. Safeway became the first American supermarket to open in the UK in 1963 but beforehand it was a prominent tool in the US efforts to prove the superiority of its way of life in the cultural Cold War with Russia. Queen Elizabeth II visited an American supermarket in Maryland in 1957 and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was similarly given a tour during a trip in 1959. Despite the attraction of US supermarkets, reports of their conditions often stressed that the more sedate British shopping habits were preferable. When BBC radio's *Woman's Hour* discussed the subject on several occasions in the early 1950s, its correspondents often pointed to the benefits of the British environment. A broadcast in 1951 which questioned the prevalent British idea that the American woman had an easy life described the range of goods on offer in a US supermarket but questioned 'if most English housewives would trade it

²⁴ 'Attitudes to Three Nationalities', February 1951, SxMOA 1/1/3/128, MOA.

²⁵ DR 4701, reply to August 1950 Directive, MOA; DR 5071, reply to August 1950 Directive, MOA.

²⁶ George Brown, MP, 'A Candid Friend', *Transport and General Workers Record*, October 1957, 37-9.

for their local shop and its unhurried atmosphere.’ It concluded that though ‘the American housewife may, in some ways, lead an easier life, perhaps a less monotonous one’ many Englishmen would not want to trade ‘the sort of peace and security they have here for the more active bustle across the Atlantic.’²⁷ For another contributor Suzanne Taylor, an American who married an Englishman, the ostensible differences between the situations for both countries’ housewives were much smaller in reality. She told listeners of her surprise that ‘almost every contraption, device and gadget that I transported so zealously from my first home to my second were all to be found here within easy reach of hand if not pocket-book.’²⁸ Similarly, when *Daily Express* columnist Ronald Singleton reported on US supermarkets’ innovations in refrigeration he asked readers ‘What about the joy of shopping; going from counter to counter; talking with the butcher as he cuts a piece of fresh steak?’²⁹

Amongst the British public, attitudes towards the US presence in the domestic economy were complicated but on the whole supportive of the inward investment. American companies such as Woolworths, Gillette and Hoover had become popular and well-known in Britain during the inter-war period and any scepticism about foreign investment in the abstract did not translate to antipathy towards particular firms. Indeed, when Research Services Limited surveyed public attitudes towards US firms and their role in the British economy in mid-1960, it reported little evidence of unfavourable views about American oil company Esso and automobile manufacturer Ford.³⁰ Amongst car drivers — the section of the population with most experience of these businesses — the favourable views comprised an even higher proportion. On the broader question of American investment in the British economy, the polling company reported greater suspicion, noting that despite the popularity of Fords or Esso ‘nearly three in ten disapprove of the idea of American companies operating in

²⁷ Ruth Hilary, ‘An Easier Time of it?’ *Woman’s Hour*, 20 February 1951, *Woman’s Hour Films* 17/18, WAC.

²⁸ Suzanne Taylor, *Woman’s Hour*, 28 January 1953, *Woman’s Hour Films* 25/26, WAC.

²⁹ Ronald Singleton, ‘Freeze it D-E-E-P- Lady’, *Daily Express*, 16 February 1955, 4.

³⁰ 58 per cent reported having favourable attitudes towards Esso whilst Ford’s approval figures were 64 per cent. The remainder of respondents were more likely to express indifference or a lack of knowledge than unfavourable views. Research Services Limited, ‘Public Opinion Survey: General Public’, August 1960, Mark Abrams Papers, ABMS 3/87, CCC.

Britain.³¹ Men, younger people and Conservatives tended to be more enthusiastic but left-wing voters were more divided about the topic. 43 per cent of Labour supporters reported that the presence of US companies in Britain was a 'good thing' compared with 33 per cent who regarded it as a 'bad thing.'³² The reasons that people gave for holding such attitudes varied. Its supporters pointed to the prospect that it would provide new opportunities for employment or innovation with some even stressing that it could promote friendly relations between the two countries. Unfavourable responses were mainly informed by nationalistic concerns that American businesses were beginning to dominate British industry and that the indigenous companies should be allowed to develop first. However, 16 per cent were reported as invoking 'a general anti-American prejudice' about the subject.³³ Judging the change in attitudes since 1953 it concluded that 'there are hints that while the anti foreign element hasn't decreased, there may be more goodwill towards the US among the previously uncommitted.'³⁴ When the organisation repeated its survey for a panel of opinion-leaders, there was even greater sympathy for the process. Majorities of elites from all political backgrounds were favourable towards the process. Despite the disagreements amongst the Labour and Liberal voters, the left-wing opinion leaders were significantly more supportive, with 53 per cent labelling the process a 'good thing.'³⁵ Thus, attitudes towards American investment were conditioned by an individual's political background and social position but only a significant minority were opposed to the process.

Although opinion polling suggested that a majority of Britons supported the American involvement in its economy, several films released during the 1950s were more critical of the US presence in Britain. *The Maggie* (1954) portrayed the farcical efforts by the head of an American multinational company to recover its cargo from an old-fashioned and widely mocked Scottish puffer accidentally entrusted with its shipment. Calvin B. Marshall (Paul Douglas), an

³¹ *Ibid*, Emphasis in Original.

³² Amongst Conservatives, the good-bad ratio was 51-26 and for Liberals it was 45-31. *Ibid*.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁵ Research Services Limited, 'Public Opinion Survey: Opinion Leaders', August 1960, Mark Abrams Papers, ABMS 3/88, CCC.

American businessman named with a likely reference to Marshall Aid, ultimately fails to regain his goods despite his financial power and hasty pursuit of the eponymous boat. Moreover, the community spirit of the Scottish working-class community was alien to Marshall who, as the film's only American appeared isolated and divorced from human contact, only maintaining contact with his wife throughout via telephone. *The Battle of the Sexes* (1959) also used comedy to explore the subject, depicting the unsuccessful efforts of productivity-driven American Angela Barrows (Constance Cummings) to reform a dilapidated and antiquated Scottish business. In the film, the sceptical manager of the Scottish tweed company Mr. Martin (Peter Sellers) manages to plot against Barrows' plans and preserve the traditional techniques of the business. These allegories about the US reception in Europe were not lost on commentators; a *Daily Worker* journalist observed that the crew in *The Maggie* possessed 'the sense of human dignity and enjoyment of life which the American has lost.'³⁶ After its release in the US, a letter published in the *New Yorker* complained that Marshall's fate was typical of the country's reception in Europe – 'taken for our money, cheated, fooled, our advice ignored, our skills wasted, our intentions sneered at.'³⁷

Whether these films were as unequivocally hostile to the US as this critic claimed was questionable, as was the belief that it represented the majority British attitude on the subject.³⁸ Rather than being a universal attitude, this contempt was likely representative of the left-wing suspicions of American investment in Britain. Both films were produced by figures associated with Ealing Studio and thus reflected some of the common Labour and Liberal doubts about American investment in Britain. Ealing's Head of Production Michael Balcon later remembered that its 'creative elite' was a 'group of liberal-minded, like-minded people ... we were rather middle-class people brought up with middle-class backgrounds and rather conventional backgrounds ... We voted Labour for the first time after the war: this was our mild

³⁶ Philip Kemp, *Lethal Innocence: The Cinema of Alexander MacKendrick* (London: Methuen, 1991), 104.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ In 1952 comedy *Castle in the Air*, a Scottish Laird eager to sell his stately home regarded a female American entrepreneur as preferable to the staid representative of the Coal Board.

revolution.’³⁹ Sellers also had private doubts which corresponded with those of his on-screen character as he concluded after a transatlantic trip in 1960 that Americans were vulgar and ‘immersed in the theology of making a fast buck.’⁴⁰ However, if the films represented wider left-wing anxieties about the subject, their critique was somewhat mild, equivocal and not merely directed at the American characters. Both films contained effete, middle-class English establishment figures supportive of the US attempts to introduce productivity lessons but similarly unable to understand the working-class communities in Scotland. They ultimately endorsed the popular construction of the ties between the two countries: British skill, experience and know-how could trump the US’s financial might.

Such comparisons between the two countries’ skills were frequently used by the British businesses and entrepreneurs who sought profits in American markets. When the Dollars Export Board or individual manufacturers provided guidance for Britons hoping to sell across the Atlantic, they often encouraged their compatriots not to compete with the mass produced US products but to emphasise the Britishness or the superior quality, tradition and craftsmanship of their goods. The Chairman of the Wool Textiles Export Corporation noted that there was ‘a tremendous cachet and prestige, and that cachet and prestige is a sales point. The very name “British” offers something different, which is a sales point, and offers something in the way of a “snob” appeal.’⁴¹ After a tour of the US in 1957, Alexander Haldane recommended in the *FBI Review* that Britons ‘should avoid, as much as possible, direct competition with American mass-produced items, where price is the factor of major importance in any transaction.’ He recommended that the authorities should emphasise the Britishness of its goods and establish a department store with ‘an entirely British atmosphere, its staff entirely British, even to the “Yeoman of the Guard” or “Beefeater” in uniform at the door.’⁴² Thus, the conception that Britons had

³⁹ Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (London: Cameron and Tayleur, 1977), 9.

⁴⁰ Roger Lewis, *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers* (London: Arrow, 2004 [1994]), 890.

⁴¹ Dollars Exports Board, *Dollars and Industry: A record of the Dollar Convention held at Eastbourne in March 1951* (London: Dollars Export Board, 1951), 98.

⁴² Alexander G. Haldane, ‘Channels to the North American market’, *FBI Review*, August 1957, 44-5

experience, skills and knowledge which contrasted with American abundance and materialism was not only applied to foreign affairs but was a reflection of a more pervasive construction of the two countries' roles and skills.

America on the Big Screen

Film policy had been a source of intergovernmental conflict during the late 1940s. In an attempt to address its chronic balance of payments crisis, the Attlee Government introduced a tax on the receipts from American films exports, a policy which prompted Hollywood to embargo British cinemas. Ultimately, the Labour Government and film distributors proved unable to fill the gap left by the US productions and negotiated the Anglo-American Film Agreement of 1948. This specified that Hollywood companies were allowed to distribute a total of 180 feature films in Britain but any profits over £17 million had to be reinvested in the indigenous industry.⁴³ As a result, nominally British films could include several American actors, producers or writers and cinema-goers were often exposed to portrayals of US characters and their relationships with their on-screen British counterparts. By mid-1953, these Anglo-American films accounted for 13 per cent of Britain's film production.⁴⁴ For sceptics about this foreign presence with domestic cinema, this added to the reasons for their criticism. *Floods of Fear* (1958), a production about an escaped convict during a flood in South Carolina which was filmed at Pinewood studios and Ruislip Lido, was labelled by *The Times* as 'a British film in an American disguise.'⁴⁵ As well as appearing artificial and unrealistic portrayals of British life, films produced with influence from Hollywood were considered by some reviewers as detrimental to home-grown actors. Indeed, the initial influx of American stars led actor's trade union equity to demand a ban on the use of foreigners unless suitable Britons were unavailable and labelled the recent *Night and the City* (1950) as not presenting a true picture of London.⁴⁶ When

⁴³ Paul Swann, *The Hollywood Feature Film in Postwar Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 101.

⁴⁴ Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s: The Decline of Deference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 126.

⁴⁵ 'Floods of Fear: British Film in an American Disguise', *The Times*, 17 November 1958, 14.

⁴⁶ 'Equity: Ban U.S. stars', *Daily Express*, 29 June 1950, 5.

the cinema adaptation of Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1955) cast Rhode Island-born actor Van Johnson in the role of protagonist Maurice Bendrix, *Daily Mirror* reviewer complained that Johnson 'doesn't do the part justice.'⁴⁷ In the *Sunday Times*, Dilys Powell's objections were more focused on the actor's nationality and compared him unfavourably with his British rivals as she remarked that Bendrix was a part 'for an actor of, say, Michael Redgrave. Instead, we are given the friendly features and agreeably grating voice of Van Johnson.'⁴⁸

Attitudes towards Hollywood films were in part shaped along class lines, with the working class audiences who eagerly consumed these imports being more receptive than the middle-class intellectuals who often commented on them. The *Manchester Guardian*'s film critic C. A. Lejeune was a frequent critic of the values she believed were introduced to Britain through Hollywood films. She questioned the effect of these products on American reputation abroad, noting its 'frank outlay of brutality; its complete indifference to world affairs; its acceptance of drunkenness as an endearing part of American army life; its completely amoral outlook.'⁴⁹ On the left, there were complaints that the industry was dominated by big business and failed to represent ordinary workers.⁵⁰ The crime, violence and sex depicted in these imports were all causes for concern. *From Here to Eternity* (1953) was one film which attracted some British criticism despite its Box Office and critical success in the US. Starring well-known Hollywood actors Burt Lancaster, Montgomery Clift and Frank Sinatra alongside British born Deborah Kerr, it depicted the experiences of American troops before Pearl Harbour. For the *Daily Express* reviewer it was 'a pretty raw and depressing film' whilst the *Observer* regarded its portrayals of the casualness of American military discipline, the corruption in the US army and the puerility of its soldiers as 'displayed in such intense and indeed

⁴⁷ Reg Whitley, 'A Halo for Housewives', *Daily Mirror*, 25 February 1955, 10.

⁴⁸ Dilys Powell, 'Submarine', *Sunday Times*, 27 February 1955, 13. Despite these complaints, a reviewer in the *Picture Post* remarked I don't care that the principals have been moved up in the social scale, and that the novelist hero is now an American. The essence of the book has come across in celluloid. 'The End of the Affair', *Picture Post*, 2 April 1955, 27 and 30.

⁴⁹ C. A. Lejeune, 'Side-Splitter', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 November 1953, 13.

⁵⁰ Frank Allaun, 'A Trade Unionist Looks at the Cinema', *New Dawn*, 15 August 1953, 515-6.

horrifying degree that they defy credibility.’⁵¹ According to *Tribune* journalist and frequent critic of US culture Geoffrey Wagner, the violence evident in Hollywood films was ‘not merely a matter of a cosh on the jaw here and there’ but ‘an attitude of mind underlying the majority of pictures being produced in Hollywood today, a lassitude of the soul, a feeling of moral dissolution and first spiritual emptiness that attempts to hypnotise us into assent, hoaxed as we are by cheap sensation.’⁵²

Other reviewers and the British public were less hostile to these imports. The tabloid press diligently reported American celebrity life and when there were reports in the British press that Rita Hayworth was largely unknown in Egypt, the *Daily Express* editorialised that ‘quite excluded from their lives has been the picture of a radiant and lovely young woman who in her film – as opposed to her matrimonial – career has given pleasure and happiness to millions.’⁵³ When Marilyn Monroe suffered a miscarriage in 1957, the *Daily Mirror* devoted its front-page to the story and reprinted a message sent to the actor which praised her for having ‘brought glamour and sparkle into our lives, and we hope you will go right on doing so.’⁵⁴ Although the US actors were exotic and glamorous, their presence in Britain also provoked some negativity with one cinema-goer reporting ‘Take the toughness of Bogart and what is left? Take the virile goody-goody pose from Taylor and what is left? In both cases just an empty shell of the mass-produced robots that Hollywood dares to call stars.’⁵⁵ Whilst the American actors attracted contrasting opinions amongst Britons, the financial arrangements of the British film industry and the attempts to distribute British films in the US ensured that the images of America and Americans were rarely hostile in UK produced films. For Robert B. Ray, this was an era during which Hollywood films frequently addressed sociological issues but they were ‘dealt with along the safe, official lines encouraged by a studied ideological optimism.’ Furthermore, ‘these films’ commercial success

⁵¹ ‘Jacques Tati Does it Again’, *Observer*, 14 November 1953, 3.

⁵² Geoffrey Wagner, *Parade of Pleasure: A Study of Popular Iconography in the USA*, 48.

⁵³ ‘A Pleasure Missed’, *Daily Express*, 17 May 1951, 4.

⁵⁴ ‘The Mirror Cables Marilyn’, *Daily Mirror*, 3 August 1957, 1.

⁵⁵ Vincent Porter and Sue Harper, ‘Throbbing Hearts and Smart Repartee: the reception of American films in 1950s Britain’, *Media History*, 4, 2 (1998), 179.

obviously depended on their conservatism, thinly disguised by an outward display of social concern.⁵⁶ This only encouraged the belief discussed in Chapter One that the US was ameliorating social problems such as racism, corruption and gangsterism. Films addressing race relations such as *Intruder in the Dust* (1949), *The Defiant Ones* (1958) and *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) were conservative and well-received in Britain, with the latter two nominated for British Academy of Film and Television Awards as the best overseas film. Released in cinemas when tensions in Little Rock and Notting Hill were recent memories, *The Defiant Ones* depicted the attempted escape from prison by an African-American inmate handcuffed to another white prisoner. Despite the prisoners' initial animosity, the film was optimistic about the possibilities for racial progress as the pair are forced to co-operate in a bid to evade capture. The *Daily Mirror* devoted almost a full page to its review of the film and reviewer Donald Zec reported that 'Hollywood has at last faced America's touchiest social problem — colour prejudice' and noted that it was 'not only a brilliant picture' but a 'mighty courageous one'.⁵⁷

Americans were rarely depicted as villains and more likely to work in concert with the British stars in partnerships which were allegorical of the growing Anglo-American relationship.⁵⁸ For example, in *Beyond this Place* (1959) Liverpool-born Paul Mathry (Van Johnson) returned from the US and uncovered a plot by the establishment to frame his father for murder. Despite the complicity of the police and politicians in this cover-up, the outsider Mathry provides the necessary dynamism and scrutiny to challenge the officials involved. As well as the fact that Americans were often presented favourably in British films, the productions were cautious about challenging the post-war Anglo-American relationship or Atlanticism which defined British policy. According to Tony Shaw, the period was one during which it is notable 'how consistent a theme communist subversion was in the cinema during this period, mirroring that widely exhibited in contemporary political discourse and popular

⁵⁶ Robert B. Ray, *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 154 and 144.

⁵⁷ Donald Zec, 'Hollywood Faces up to Race Hate' *Daily Mirror*, 18 September 1958, 5.

⁵⁸ See Vincent Porter and Sue Harper, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, 128.

literature.’⁵⁹ As well as reflecting the prevailing anti-communism, cinema usually presented an Anglo-American partnership which co-operated in opposition to totalitarian or subversive threats. This was particularly the case during the height of Cold War tension. Released shortly after the outbreak of war in Korea, *Highly Dangerous* (1950) portrayed a Cold War Anglo-American alliance between British entomologist Frances Gray (Margaret Lockwood) and US journalist Bill Casey (Dane Clark). The pair aim to penetrate an authoritarian Balkan state in order to capture insects set to be used for bacteriological warfare and, successful in their mission, the film has a romantic ending. In this, it did little to challenge the notion of the importance of Anglo-American affinity but it did present a caricature of totalitarianism behind the Iron Curtain. Moreover, allowing Gray to exercise leadership after being given drugs by communist officials even portrayed the relationship as one in which Britain could direct its ally. Such was the frequency of cinematic alliances between Britons and Americans that film critic Raymond Durnat later noted that this was a period during which the two nationalities were ‘buddies locked in complete identity of interest.’⁶⁰ Indeed, films such as *Rough Shoot* (1952), *The Iron Petticoat* (1955) and *Dr. No* (1962) re-enforced the anti-communism which was common amongst elites and the public throughout the period. Even films with plots not directly related to the Cold War or international relations would often cast Britons and Americans as allies.

Not all representations of the Cold War relationship were as simple and the onscreen Anglo-American co-operation was at times strained. *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955), a science fiction thriller in which US scientist Bernard Quatermass (Bernard Donleavy) and a British policeman Inspector Lomax (Jack Warner) work to prevent the spread of an alien life form, was more ambiguous. It depicted astronaut Victor Carroon’s gradual transformation into a plant-like alien life-form which then expands across London before being tamed in a stand-off at Westminster Abbey. Although the Britons and Americans work together to resist the growth of this alien invasion, the

⁵⁹ Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War*, 62.

⁶⁰ Raymond Durnat, *A Mirror for England: British Movies from Austerity to Affluence* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970), 29n.

partnership is fraught by divergent temperaments and approaches to problems. Quatermass's original experiment had taken place without official sanction ('If the whole world waited for official sanction it'd be standing still!') and his character frustrated the British officials. With American officials and elites routinely characterised as headstrong or bombastic and willing to bypass UN arbitration, some within the audience would have likely agreed with the view expressed by Carroon's wife Judith that Quatermass was responsible for her husband's condition. The Anglo-American relationship between Lomax and Quatermass also contained signs of this uneasiness about the British links with Washington as the former's claim that 'Nobody wins a Cold War' reflected some concerns about the US's tactics. Others were similarly unwilling to endorse the Cold War orthodoxies or question the international bipolarity. *The Young Lovers* (1955) and *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961) critiqued both superpowers for their role in escalating world tensions. The former portrayed the development of a forbidden love affair between the daughter of a Russian ambassador in London and an American working in the US Embassy and the efforts of both countries to prevent their relationship. When they elope at the end of the film, they leave a note for their pursuers which read:

You say the world is divided in two that we cannot escape that fact. We are going to try. You, who live in separate worlds, can no longer believe in innocence because you no longer believe in love. But without love, you will destroy not, as you think, each other, but yourselves.

The film's release at a time of relative cordiality in Cold War relations had an effect on its content. Its producer Anthony Havelock-Allen was reported as stating that the American Embassy approved the script in advance and that 'We waited three years to make the picture, hoping for the right climate.'⁶¹

⁶¹ David Lewin, 'LOVE—just love—MAKES A THRILLER', *Daily Express*, 26 August 1954, 3.

Importing America

As well as the Hollywood films which had been popular in Britain since the 1920s, the 1950s witnessed the import of new cultural products which began to feature in debates about youth culture, the rise of the teenager and the ‘Americanisation’ of this section of the population. Rock ‘n’ roll music, horror comics and bowling allies were amongst the items imitated in Britain or exported across the Atlantic which in turn provoked interest and criticism. Reactions tended to be organised along class and generational lines with working class and younger Britons usually more receptive to these products than elites or their parents. Particularly amongst teenagers — a section of the population which received greater scrutiny during the 1950s — the promise of America could provide an antidote to the perceived limitations and restrictions of their own culture. The comments of a 53 year-old housewife illustrated the different views of the US and its products as she told M-O that ‘We are the victims of their films, their jazz, and their murdering of our tongue. Of course, were I twenty instead of fifty I should not “feel this way” about them.’⁶² The affluence of the 1950s afforded young people more disposable income and the increased birth rates during and after the Second World War meant that adolescents formed a larger and more prominent section of the population.

Fears about the growing evidence of juvenile delinquency were often linked with the imports from the US, particularly rock ‘n’ roll music. Former editor of *Tribune* Tosco Fyvel argued that youth violence, gang culture and hooliganism were international problems but were particularly acute in America. He noted that ‘the violence of the street-gangs in Manhattan suggests what the Teddy-boy problem might become in another twenty years *if* the problem gets worse.’⁶³ Various features of youth culture caused concern but the fondness of American inspired popular music in particular prompted occasional warnings. Music, it was believed by the British establishment, carried ideological messages and the BBC with its monopoly over radio broadcasting believed that it was its duty to prevent the spread of ‘unrespectable’ music. Then still wedded to Reithian ideas

⁶² DR 4014, Reply to August 1950 Directive, MOA.

⁶³ T. R. Fyvel, *The Insecure Offenders* (London: Pelican, 1963 [1961]), 154.

about preserving the tastes and standards of its listeners, the Corporation was sceptical about popular music which was perceived as uneducated or lacking the skill of classical music. Commentators tended to point to popular American musicians as threatening to undermine traditional patterns of behaviour or suggested that their influence could Americanise the British public. With British acts such as Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard influenced by US style of music, Colin MacInnes labelled the UK's youth culture as 'half English' because 'new American musical idioms [...] have swamped our own ditties with the help, above all, of the shared language of the lyrics.'⁶⁴

The fears that American rock 'n' roll encouraged juvenile delinquency, violence, criminality or immorality were particularly apparent when there were reports of riots in 1956 following screenings of the Hollywood films *Rock Around the Clock* and *The Blackboard Jungle*. Both contained scenes which featured rebellious youths and provided a focus for the growing youth culture. Local exhibitors called for the film to be banned but there were questions even at the time as to whether this was another example of a 'moral panic' which met an American import.⁶⁵ Despite press reports about the violence which occurred at cinemas showing *Rock Around the Clock*, the Circuits Management Association which was responsible for managing British cinemas told the Home Office that the press had exaggerated the importance of these incidents. In response to the *Daily Express* claim about vandalism at a Glasgow cinema, the manager of the cinema concerned reported that the 'only damage done at the theatre was to one glass display panel which is smashed on an average once a week by local hooligans – irrespective of the film.' Another cinema manager from Saltaire described that it was a 'falsehood' that a brawl had broke out between Teddy Boys.⁶⁶ By contrast with these reports, the visit to

⁶⁴ Colin MacInnes, *England, Half English* (London: Hogarth Press, 1986 [1961]), 13.

⁶⁵ Adrian Horn, *Juke Box Britain: Americanisation and Youth Culture, 1945-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 78-9.

⁶⁶ Letter from R. H. Dewes to Austin Strutt, 18 January 1957, HO 300/6, TNA.

Britain of Bill Haley and the Comets in 1957 witnessed no repeat displays of the signs of juvenile unrest which was reported in some British cinemas.⁶⁷

Although the US exercised significant influence over British culture, it is questionable whether this represented domination or Americanisation. For David Snowman, Britain was more open to cultural imports than it had been before but its 'receptivity to the products of American culture was not slavish or indiscriminate. Nor does it appear to have been as conscious or as wholehearted as was that of some other societies.'⁶⁸ Indeed, not only did British rock 'n' roll stars adopt their own vernacular but there was also some opposition to the introduction of American styles and customs. Politicians and journalists often appeared slow to understand the appeal of American culture amongst people or were sceptical about its growing influence. A *Daily Herald* journalist was unlikely alone in his condescension for young people's tastes when he noted that Sam Cooke's *Chain Gang* had 'all the obvious gimmicks ... body shacking grunts and rattling effects. Yet even today's happy-go-lucky youngsters should realise, as they jig around their jukeboxes, that there's nothing amusing about chain gangs.'⁶⁹ For politicians on the left who were sceptical about consumerism and affluence, these pursuits seemed less worthy of expenditure than provisions on welfare. Harold Wilson told the Labour Party conference in 1960 that 'If you build a hospital our economy is in danger. If you build a pub or a bowling alley it is sacrosanct, but build one school and it is inflationary.'⁷⁰ Wilson's reference to bowling alleys came at a time when their spread had been somewhat controversial. As cinema attendance began to flag, the Rank Organisation and Associated British Cinemas converted some of their properties into alleys. Though there were reports of protests from communities anxious about the association between bowling alleys and juvenile delinquency with schemes blocked in Doncaster and Welwyn Garden City, many press accounts were enthusiastic about this new leisure activity. In 1962, when there

⁶⁷ Gillian A. M. Mitchell, 'Reassessing 'the Generation Gap': Bill Haley's 1957 Tour of Britain, Inter-Generational Relations and Attitudes to Rock 'n' Roll in the Late 1950s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 24, 4 (2013), 573-605.

⁶⁸ Daniel Snowman, *Kissing Cousins: An Interpretation of British and American Culture 1945 to 1975* (London: Temple Smith, 1977), 263.

⁶⁹ Huw Richards, *The Bloody Circus*, 175.

⁷⁰ *LPACR* 1960, 149.

were already eighteen such venues in Britain, Rank's Bowling Director Ivor Smith reassured Londoners that the new alley in Streatham had 'no intention of permitting Teddy Boys and such types to congregate here and make themselves a nuisance.'⁷¹ Rather than being interpreted as a purely American invasion, many commentators regarded ten pin bowling as the re-export of an English product because of its similarities with the Puritan game of nine-pins.⁷² Given an exclusive tour of a new bowling alley, the *Daily Mirror*'s Agony Aunt Marjorie Proops confessed her ineptitude at the sport but, after hearing that a group of GIs would act as instructors, told readers 'I just can't wait to be instructed by twenty US servicemen.'⁷³

It was not only popular music and youth culture which appeared to Britons to be glamorous or exotic. During 1954, the evangelist preacher Reverend Billy Graham visited the United Kingdom and his shows at Wembley and Haringey Stadiums were attended by thousands of Britons and Graham gained many converts. However, his brand of religion was controversial in Britain because of its commercialised nature. As one Briton recalled, 'I saw a billboard ... and I quite mistakenly thought that this might be some sort of show — Billy Graham was the comedian and Bev Shea is the soloist, or the band leader.'⁷⁴ Despite being a commercialised performance that was heavily advertised, the 'crusade' was not unpopular with the British public. Graham's presence and message received backing from the establishment as the preacher was invited to Downing Street by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, the Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher appeared onstage with Graham and Queen Elizabeth II was reported to have watched him on the BBC on Good Friday 1954.⁷⁵ Though the commercialism of the broadcasts might have been met with disapproval from some British observers, many were sympathetic towards this

⁷¹ Jack Crossley, 'Ten-pin Chief Gives Pledges', *Daily Mail*, 29 January 1962, 3.

⁷² 'Booming Bowling Alleys', *Financial Times*, 14 April 1959, 8; 'The Bowling Alley Invasion', *Financial Times*, 20 January 1960, 11.

⁷³ Marjorie Proops, 'Well, bowl me over—I was SKITTLED!', *Daily Mirror*, 2 March 1960, 11.

⁷⁴ Alana Harris and Martin Spence, "'Disturbing the Complacency of Religion'? The Evangelical Crusades of Dr Billy Graham and Father Patrick Peyton in Britain, 1951-54', *Twentieth Century British History*, 18, 4 (2007), 492.

⁷⁵ George Burnham, *Billy Graham: A Mission Accomplished* (London: Marshall, Scott and Morgan, 1955), 36.

style of religion. A correspondent in the *Daily Mail* editorialised that ‘If St. Paul were here today he would applaud Billy Graham’s 600 bus sides, his 1,500 posters, his 150 billboards, his 20,000 car stickers, and the lavish newspaper advertising and the highly skilled public relations techniques.’⁷⁶ Attempts to measure the proportion of favourable reactions were imprecise but generally showed that significant sections of the public were well-disposed to the preacher. BIPO surveys suggested that almost all of their respondents were aware of Graham’s presence in Britain.⁷⁷ The *Picture Post* reported that 88 per cent of the letters it received were favourable but the *Manchester Guardian* recorded a more mixed response when Graham returned in 1955.⁷⁸ In some of the samples re-printed in the former publication, the correspondents stressed that the preacher had ‘made Greater London deeply conscious of real Christianity’ whilst one committed atheist claimed that ‘[b]y the end of the meeting I was so completely convinced that my previous ideas were wrongly thought out, that I joined the crowd of new converts.’ Not all were favourable as one complained of ‘emotional blackmail’ yet one 15 year old even claimed to possess, since the visit, a ‘completely different outlook on life’ and a ‘reason for living.’⁷⁹

Communists tended to be most vocal in their opposition towards US culture and were usually the most eager to foster any resentment about the influx of American imports in Britain. Though their complaints were not always well-received, the far left had one success in the campaign against horror comics from the US which arrived in the UK during the Second World War. Although the popularity of television, popular music and films was not affected by its attacks on these products, in the late 1940s a far left-led campaign against ‘horror comics’ achieved much wider popularity. These products arrived in Britain towards the end of the Second World War with the GIs stationed in RAF bases and by the 1950s attracted the attention of politicians, officials and

⁷⁶ ‘Would St Paul Have Used Television?’ *Daily Mail*, 28 May 1954, 4.

⁷⁷ BIPO Survey 406, May 1954, CCO 180/21/1/1, CPA.

⁷⁸ ‘Billy Graham: What did he really achieve?’ *Picture Post*, 5 June 1954, 9-11. *Manchester Guardian* editor AP Wadsworth wrote to Alistair Cooke reported that the first day’s response was 1 pro and 20 anti but the following day 34 to 11. Letter from A. P. Wadsworth to Alistair Cooke, 10 March 1955, B/202/717, MGP.

⁷⁹ ‘Billy Graham: What did he really achieve?’ *Picture Post*, 5 June 1954, 9-11.

schoolteachers who were eager to prevent their influence on the population. The CPGB's 1951 Cultural Conference had denounced various forms of American culture and channelled protests against comics. However, an edition of far left journal *Arena* made a distinction between the 'reactionary elements in USA society' and the 'culture of the American people, the America of Emerson and Whitman, Theodore Dreiser, Paul Robeson and Howard Fast.'⁸⁰ In common with many of the warnings about Britain's Americanisation, the party conceived that British culture and identity was under threat from a variety of US imports, one of which was American-style comics. Publications such as *Haunt of Fear* and *Tales from the Crypt* were often cited amongst campaigners and were compared unfavourably with what were said to be less violent and dangerous English equivalents, which tended to be based on fairy stories. Indeed, Conservative Party journal *Onward* reprinted a page of American comic "The School Children Killers" alongside an article on the subject by Enid Blyton, who was amongst the best-known British writers of fairy stories. She described American comics as too frequently emphasising the triumph of evil over good and did not develop children's reading skills. By contrast, British comics were 'quite different' and 'often a half-way house to better reading.'⁸¹

Part of the reason for the far left's success in lobbying for legislation to prohibit 'horror comics' was due to the campaigner's concerted effort to avoid the use of language which could be conceived as 'anti-American.' This would have risked alienating those who were reluctant to offend Britain's closest ally, particularly given the growing anxiety about the growth in the attitude. As Martin Barker has noted, after 1953 'the comics against which the campaign was directed underwent a change of nomenclature which is very significant' as the 'American-style' publications were more frequently referred to as 'horror comics' or 'crime and horror comics.'⁸² This contrast was apparent in debates about the subject in Parliament. Introducing an Adjournment debate in August 1952, left-wing Labour MP Maurice Edelman described 'the pernicious and

⁸⁰ Cited in Martin Barker, *A Haunt of Fears: The Strange History of the British Horror Comics Campaign* (London: Pluto, 1984), 21.

⁸¹ Enid Blyton, 'The Mind of a Child', *Onward*, October 1953, 2.

⁸² Martin Barker, *A Haunt of Fears*, 18.

harmful effects of the circulation of American-style comics in this country.’ Though Edelman warned against the issue being used ‘as an excuse by those who seek some stick with which to beat the Americans,’ his Labour colleague Horace King echoed the communist line with the claim that ‘We want to keep our English ways. What we get from America is not the best of American life, the natural American culture that exists in a million homes in that country, but all that is worst from America both in scenes portrayed in the films and in this particularly nasty and cheap literature which is coming over.’⁸³ In a much longer debate in Parliament in February 1955 there were fewer references to America or American-style comics with one MP noting the changes in language since the subject first received attention.⁸⁴

Commercial Television

Perceptions of American culture and its perceived merits and defects were particularly apparent in discussions about the future of British broadcasting, which was the subject of political debate throughout the whole period. The introduction of second television channel ITV in 1955 was preceded by assessment of conditions across the Atlantic. The interest in American broadcasting techniques pre-dated the Second World War. In 1945, the BBC retained the monopoly over television and radio which it had had since being granted its licence in 1923. Doubts about the quality of the US system had been partly responsible for the reluctance in the inter-war period to introduce commercial or sponsored television in Britain and the 1925 Crawford Committee concluded that its ‘system of uncontrolled transmission and reception is unsuited to this country.’⁸⁵ Ostensibly, the two countries had markedly different broadcasting traditions which led to contrasting programming styles on both sides of the Atlantic. Since its foundation, the nationalized BBC had embodied the paternalist aims of educating and

⁸³ Maurice Edelman, HC Deb, *Hansard*, 1 August 1952, Volume 504, Column 2023; Horace King, *Ibid*, Column 2030-1. Conservative MP Hugh Lucas-Tooth complained about the terminology of ‘American-style’ comics. *Ibid* Column 2034-5.

⁸⁴ H. M. Hyde, HC Deb, 22 February 1955, *Hansard*, Volume 537, Column 1140-1.

⁸⁵ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 301.

informing (as well as entertaining) the public whereas the US system was organised around private, profit-seeking organisations. By the late 1940s, however, the American model attracted various supporters in Britain. Although increased exposure to US tastes and culture in wartime provoked some snobbery, it also led to questions as to whether the BBC's staid content could be improved with outside inspiration and innovation. In a series of articles in April 1951, the *Daily Express* journalist Leonard Mosley bemoaned the state of British television, concluding that the problem was 'not that we lag behind the Americans, but that we do not need to lag behind.' The 'pioneering spirit that once made our TV service foremost in the world,' he asserted, 'has been smothered.'⁸⁶ Mosley's comments were representative of ideas that were popular amongst conservatives at the start of the 1950s. Attacks on the BBC's bureaucracy intersected with right-wing criticisms of the nationalisations introduced by the Attlee Government and the Conservative Party's promises to 'Set the People Free.'⁸⁷

Not all of the party or its associated groups and individuals were as fond of the prospect of commercial television being introduced to Britain. Its senior politicians Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Lord Salisbury and R. A. Butler were far from enthusiastic about the possible end to the BBC's monopoly whilst Lord Hailsham and Lord Halifax were openly hostile. Indeed, there was initially 'no significant Party leadership for commercial television' and criticism of American television was often apparent in conservative journals.⁸⁸ In spite of the reservations about commercial television amongst conservatives, the Churchill Government ultimately introduced the legislation that led to the establishment of independent television. The outcome of the Beveridge Committee on broadcasting, which was convened in 1949 and reported in 1951, led to the growth of a group of Conservatives who urged the end to the BBC's

⁸⁶ Leonard Mosley, 'Two Pictures — at the Pace of One', *Daily Express*, 21 June 1951, 4. Emphasis in Original.

⁸⁷ Earl Woolton remembered in 1959 that he was impressed by the 'rapid strides made by American television because 'they had associated it with commercial advantage in a manner that seemed acceptable to the taste of most people of the United States.' Earl Woolton, *The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon Earl of Woolton*, 389.

⁸⁸ H. H. Wilson, *Pressure Group: The Campaign for Commercial Television* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1961), 15. For example D. W. Brogan, 'Television Over There', *Spectator*, 26 January 1951, 103-4.

monopoly. The Conservative ‘representative’ to the committee Selwyn Lloyd disagreed with the report’s recommendation that sponsored television not be introduced as he welcomed the prospect of commercialism alongside the BBC. Foreign Secretary during the Suez Crisis, Lloyd told *The Times* editor William Haley that he liked the ‘competition to produce good programmes’ in the US and that local radio stations ‘can be used to promote community spirit and local interest, to encourage local talent and enterprise.’⁸⁹ However, he was not entirely positive about American examples, describing that ‘advertisements aimed at North American eyes and ears seem to me to be boring, repetitive and lacking in subtlety.’⁹⁰

These conclusions were informed as much by Lloyd’s pre-existing political beliefs and attitudes as his experience of the US. According to left-wing British writer Mary Stocks, who served on the Beveridge Committee and travelled with Lloyd on his North American tour, his viewpoint was the consequence of his ‘addiction to private enterprise.’⁹¹ If Lloyd’s interpretations of broadcasting across the Atlantic were conditioned by related ideological views, the same was true of the majority who supported the status quo. Unlike the conservatives who pointed to the potential of the medium in a free-market capitalist system, the detractors of commercial television were influenced by their paternalism and the aversion to advertising which were popular on the left. Labour MP Joseph Reeves’s comments in the Beveridge Report noted that programming across the Atlantic was ‘positively ruined by obtrusive and objectionable advertising matter’ with such arguments predictably resonating with the BBC.⁹² After a US study tour, the organisation’s Chairman Lord Simon described its radio content as ‘extravagant’ and warned that ‘if we do not want a disastrous lowering of standards of broadcasting in this country we should avoid sponsored broadcasting like the plague.’⁹³ As the campaign to introduce commercial television gathered pace in the early 1950s, similar ideas were crucial to the

⁸⁹ D. R. Thorpe, *Selwyn Lloyd* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989), 130; *Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1949), 308.

⁹⁰ *Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949*, 207.

⁹¹ Mary Stocks, *My Commonplace Book* (London: Peter Davies, 1970), 173–4.

⁹² *Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949*, 298.

⁹³ Lord Simon, *The BBC from Within*, 235.

arguments utilised by the opposition. The left complained about the amount of violence on American screens, the domination of big business over the format and pointed to Senator Joseph McCarthy's manipulation of the medium as a warning for Britain.⁹⁴ Outlining the number of lynchings, murders and holdups on US television, a Labour pamphlet asked 'Do we want this kind of debasement of standards in Britain?'⁹⁵ These left-wing warnings were epitomised by NBC's reporting of the coverage of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953. When the *Today Show* juxtaposed its mascot, a chimpanzee named J. Fred Muggs, with pictures from London it seemed to vindicate the warnings about commercial television. Though Conservatives were keen to dismiss the importance of such examples, Labour politicians pointed to this incident as evidence of the debasement that could occur in Britain and the incident was widely reported and ridiculed, provoking questions in the House of Commons.⁹⁶

Despite the contrasting views about commercial broadcasting and attitudes towards the prospect of its adoption by Britain, supporters and opponents were united in the assumption that their culture was superior to that apparent in the US. Whereas the left warned about the possible degeneration that could occur by importing American methods, conservatives suggested that the British people were too sensible to be attracted by vulgar programming. Because the advocates of ITV wanted the new channel to broadcast alongside the BBC and the Independent Television Association was created in principle to regulate content, Conservatives pointed to significant differences with the US. Home Secretary David Maxwell-Fyfe was amongst the most explicit, claiming that he

⁹⁴ See Ness Edwards, 'Commercial T.V. – The Great Monopoly', *Forward*, 24 July 1954, 2; Frank Allaun, 'The Tories' TV Threat', *New Dawn*, 16 January 1954, 39-40; Ness Edwards, 'Commercial TV is a Monstrosity!', *New Dawn*, 31 July 1954, 489-90; Dudley Parker, 'Commercial TV versus the BBC', *Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers' Monthly Journal*, February 1955, 84.

⁹⁵ *Labour Party Talking Point: The Tories and Television*, 28 June 1952, 102. Watching a CBS news programme in 1953, Aneurin Bevan was overheard by Richard Crossman as he complained that 'The whole thing is completely infantile.' Janet Morgan (ed), *The Backbench Diaries of Richard Crossman*, 20 March 1953, 214.

⁹⁶ See HC Debs, 17 June 1953, Volume 516, Columns 958-62 and 20 May 1954, Volume 527, Columns 2412-3. 57 per cent of the public reported having heard about the American coverage with 25 per cent of those saying that it had made them more opposed to the introduction of commercial television. BIPO Survey 364A, June 1953, CCO 180/21/1/1, CPA.

was ‘not impressed by analogies from the United States.’ He explained that this was because ‘We have our typical British way of resolving problems of taste, just like any other problem. We are a much more mature and sophisticated people.’⁹⁷ Maxwell-Fyfe’s views provoked criticism from former Foreign Secretary Herbert Morrison, who claimed that his ideas resembled ‘anti-Americanism.’⁹⁸ However, an anti- and pro-American schema is a poor guide for categorising and understanding the reactions during the debates about the introduction of commercial television. Brogan’s comments the prevalence on US television of ‘horrid little children with ugly voices aping grown ups’ demonstrated that Atlanticism in other questions did not always translate to approval of US culture and even Churchill’s notion of an English-speaking world did not prevent him from being lukewarm about the subject.⁹⁹ Christopher Mayhew, anti-communist Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office during the Attlee Government, opposed the proposals because it would ‘bring British and American TV standards constantly closer together’ which was dangerous ‘to our whole national culture and way of life.’¹⁰⁰ In the same way that Britons studied US politics for evidence which justified their ideological perspectives, their analysis of American culture was informed by an effort to identify trends which supported their convictions about the subject. Though several commentators and politicians pointed to Canada, New Zealand or Australia to support their perspectives, the US’s position as a model of modernity ensured that American ‘lessons’ resonated more widely.

American examples were crucial in the early debates about the possible introduction of commercial television but in the years after ITV began broadcasting conditions from across the Atlantic became less frequently cited portents. After all, critics no longer needed to travel abroad or study NBC or CBS for evidence of the ills of privatised programming. Nonetheless, when the new channel was introduced in 1955, some objections were voiced about its

⁹⁷ David Maxwell-Fyfe, HC Deb, 11 June 1952, Volume 502, Column 221.

⁹⁸ Herbert Morrison, *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ See page 72.

¹⁰⁰ Christopher Mayhew, *Dear Viewer* (London: Lincolns-Praeger, 1953), 13. See also Christopher Mayhew, *Commercial Television: What is to be Done?* (London: Fabian Society, 1959).

content. A reporter in *Punch* wrote after its introduction that ‘We expected the I.T.A. to borrow ideas, programmes and films from American television. We knew that the advertising agencies would fashion their “spots” on the American plan. What we didn’t bargain for was an entire service geared to the American way of life.’¹⁰¹ Others were less perturbed by any similarities with broadcasting across the Atlantic and welcomed the programming and advertisements of the new channel. The *Daily Mirror* — which despite its left-wing background supported the introduction of commercial television — reported that the critics had been proven wrong because the channel was ‘enterprising and balanced’ with the advertisements being ‘expertly handled.’¹⁰² In the *Daily Mail*, entrepreneur Miles Thomas reported with what was a probable reference to the US that ‘I saw nothing of the sometimes brash and vulgar elements that appear on other screens. We seem to have combined wit with our selling approach in an attractive manner. And I saw no evidence of bad taste.’¹⁰³

As Lawrence Black has noted of the Labour Party, the party’s ‘opposition to TV diminished through the early 1960s’ partly because ‘fears of ‘Americanization’ faded’ and the party accepted independent television’s popularity.¹⁰⁴ However, during the late 1950s, the issue continued to cause questions about the cultural influence of the US over Britain even if debates about Americanisation were less frequent. Part of the problem for critics of the medium was its popularity amongst the general public. American imports such as *I Love Lucy*, a comedy based on the exploits of Lucille Ball which portrayed the opulent lifestyle of a New York apartment block, and Los Angeles police detective programme *Dragnet* were successful in Britain.¹⁰⁵ In a *News Chronicle* poll in January 1956, *I Love Lucy* was the second most popular programme with viewers and the BBC struggled to compete with the new

¹⁰¹ Quoted in David Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951-57*, 510.

¹⁰² ‘ITV: The Verdict’, *Daily Mirror*, 29 September 1955, 2.

¹⁰³ ‘Sir Miles Prefers our TV ads’, *Daily Mail*, 29 September 1955, 3.

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-1964* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003), 102.

¹⁰⁵ When the subject of American television imports was again raised in 1965, Conservative MP Ian Orr-Ewing reported ‘I find great pleasure, as does my family, in “I Love Lucy”. I have formed a great endearment for her and I hope she lives for ever. Many American programmes are harmless and engaging. Both the B.B.C. and the I.T.A. put on quite a lot of these good American programmes during popular hours and they are widely appreciated. HC Deb, 13 May 1965, *Hansard*, Volume 712, Column 777.

channel.¹⁰⁶ With US programmes having such an immediate appeal to the public, the charges of Americanisation lost some force but still persisted into the 1960s. In 1957, the Conservative Party received complaints about the ‘ever-increasing Americanisation’ of ITV and BBC and their broadcasting of ‘unintelligent and alien programmes’ but sought to allay fears by stressing that such trends were exaggerated.¹⁰⁷ Despite the success of many American imports, their presence continued to provoke criticism on the left. In 1959, reports of cheating in *21* — a quiz show imported from the US — led to renewed focus on the quality of the US imports. D. W. Brogan described that the American citizen was ‘disconcerted’ by ‘a series of shocks in the past year which are forcing a domestic “agonizing reappraisal,”’ one of which was the ‘serio-comic tragedy of the rigged TV quizzes’ during which the public was ‘bamboozled by the great mass media.’¹⁰⁸ In the *Daily Mirror*, “Cassandra” described it as evidence that the ‘Fast Buck, or high-speed dollar obtained in circumstances that do not always bear close examination, is a revered institution.’¹⁰⁹ However, the scandal surrounding *21* did not provoke the same degree of anxiety as the appearance of the chimp J. Fred Muggs’ during the coverage of the coronation. By 1959, Mayhew’s objections were more about the extent of American and “mid-Atlantic” features rather than their presence. He argued of the British public that ‘While welcoming a fair ration of American television programmes, they regard with horror the possibility of creating in Britain a hybrid mid-Atlantic culture.’¹¹⁰

Warnings about the Americanisation of British television received renewed attention in 1962 with the publication of the Pilkington Report which criticised ITV for having failed to uphold ‘standards’ in broadcasting. With renowned sceptic of American culture Richard Hoggart serving on the committee, it is unsurprising that these conclusions were emphasised. However, the

¹⁰⁶ ‘News Chronicle – TV’s Top Ten’, January 1956, CCO 180/21/1/2, CPA.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from the Manager, Board of Finance to Michael Fraser, 31 December 1957, CRD 2/20/15, CPA; Letter from Mr Bellairs to Manager, Board of Finance, 6 January 1958, CRD 2/20/15, CPA.

¹⁰⁸ D. W. Brogan, *America in the Modern World* (London: Hamish Hamilton 1960), xi.

¹⁰⁹ “Cassandra”, ‘Tom, Dick and Harry’, *Daily Mirror*, 4 November 1959, 6.

¹¹⁰ Christopher Mayhew, *Commercial Television – What is to be Done?* (London: Fabian Society, 1959), 8.

submissions by the communist and socialist parties did not attack commercial television for importing American tastes and mores or because it corroded the British national identity but because the left was underrepresented on the medium. The evidence submitted by the Socialist Party of Great Britain even lauded the US example as it reported that its ‘companion organizations in certain other countries have fared better than we have here, and our own members on visits to the USA fairly easily obtain the opportunity denied to us in this country.’¹¹¹ Thus, this example illustrates that debates about American culture were not static but capable of shifting over time and, though television was at one point a key battleground in the debates about the US’s influence in Britain, its introduction lessened its potency as a symbol of life across the Atlantic.

Encountering America

Whilst Britons could often construct vivid impressions of American culture without having experienced the country, the number of people having visited the US increased during the 1950s. As the geopolitical rivalry between Washington and Moscow intensified, so did the cultural Cold War and the efforts by both governments to prove the superiority of their way of life to potential and existing allies. The United States Information Agency (USIA) was created in 1953 to disseminate sympathetic views of American society, politics and culture whilst bodies such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) promoted American art forms such as jazz and abstract expressionist art. One tactic used by successive US administrations during the Cold War to influence international attitudes towards its culture was the funding of visits for burgeoning politicians, journalists, officials and academics. In Britain, these “Smith-Mundt” programmes were particularly targeted at the soft left of the Labour Party and TUC, because they were regarded by the US as more likely to challenge NATO given the presence within their ranks of critics of

¹¹¹ Paper No. 165: Socialist Party of Great Britain, Cmnd 1819—1, *Report on the Committee on Broadcasting 1960: Volume II, Appendix E: Memoranda Submitted to the Committee* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1962), 925-7.

Atlanticism.¹¹² The trips contributed to a growth in transatlantic travel; only 24,000 Britons visited the US in 1937 compared with 54,000 by 1954 and 69,000 in 1959.¹¹³ Dollar exchange restrictions at the beginning of the decade meant that most prospective visitors had to rely on funding from the State Department or other US organisations such as the Fulbright Foundation or Commonwealth Fund. The goal of such trips was to manage the American reputation abroad and its stated aim was ‘to build a receptive climate of public opinion overseas in which the actions and policies of the US can be correctly interpreted.’¹¹⁴

As well as aiming to influence the views of the participants, this cultural diplomacy sought to have a much wider impact as the visitors were encouraged to disseminate recollections and observations from their tours. Consequently, accounts of American visits were regular features in journals and newspapers, and several book-length studies of trips were published. Such was the interest that between August 1953 and February 1955 every edition of the General and Municipal Workers’ monthly journal featured an article about the visits of two of its members. The weight of these accounts and the earnestness of their authors attracted some ridicule. *Punch* satirised the genre in 1958, publishing a series of articles about an American trip by a journalist who had never visited the US and Welsh poet Dylan Thomas described that the tourists ‘write in their notebooks like demons, generalising away, on character and culture and American political scene.’¹¹⁵ For novelist Kingsley Amis, the problem with the British visitors was not their banality but their attitudes towards their hosts, a judgement which encouraged his belief that anti-American sentiment was increasing.¹¹⁶ His novel *One Fat Englishman*, which was based on his experiences on the East Coast in 1958, portrayed the Britons in the US as

¹¹² Such was the relative frequency that left-wing figures travelled to the US that a visitor from the Conservative Party reported the good impression that Labour spokesmen had made in Boston and said that the ‘fact that so few Conservatives appear to have spoke in this area tells against the Government.’ Patrick Wall MP, Report on Lecture Tour in United States, March-April 1957, CCO 4/7/147, CPA.

¹¹³ Bruce Russett, *Community and Contention: Britain and America in the Twentieth Century*, 102.

¹¹⁴ Giles Scott-Smith, *Networks of Empire: The US State Department’s Foreign Leader Program in the Netherlands, France, and Britain 1950-70* (Brussels, Peter Lang, 2008), 34.

¹¹⁵ Dylan Thomas, ‘A Visit to America’, *Listener*, 22 April 1954, 692-3.

¹¹⁶ Kingsley Amis, ‘America – 1960’.

ungrateful, rude and excessively critical. Its protagonist Roger Micheldene summarised what Amis believed to be the typical complaints about the country, its culture and society:

Do you think I don't know it's a bloody sight worse than England in all these ways? Bloody gold-plated bathroom taps and the John Birch Society and muggings in Central Park and no Jews in the golf club and Little Rock and Las Vegas and Vassar and ... well ... If it was my own country I'd simply ...¹¹⁷

Despite these suggestions that the accounts of American visits were cliché-ridden and monotonous, the reports were quite diverse as participants recorded a range of emotions, beliefs and prejudices when confronted with US life. The allure of its cultural capital was not always seductive, though. For several visitors the country was a disappointment and they invoked well-rehearsed stereotypes about the nature of the American public or its cities. In the *Listener*, Geoffrey Grigson, a poet and critic who worked for the BBC, reported after a visit 'Most Americans walk about the Loop in Chicago or up and down Canal Street in New Orleans and they don't realise it is ugly.' Despite his contempt for the British travellers, Dylan Thomas made his own private observations about life across the Atlantic. A visitor to the US on several occasions during 1950s, he reported that America was 'all an enormous façade of speed and efficiency and power behind which millions of little individuals are wrestling, in vain, with their own anxieties.'¹¹⁸ Informed by ongoing debates about the Americanisation of British culture and society, the most persistent critique was that the US was a homogenous and conformist society in which a mass culture was minimising regional or local variety.¹¹⁹

Most provocative amongst this type of account was J. B. Priestley and Jacquetta Hawkes's 1955 book *Journey Down a Rainbow*, which juxtaposed their separate trips to Texas and the pre-modern pueblo societies of New Mexico. According to Priestley, the US epitomised 'Admass', the mass,

¹¹⁷ Kingsley Amis, *One Fat Englishman* (London: Penguin, 2011 [1963]), 40.

¹¹⁸ George Tremlett, *Dylan Thomas: In the Mercy of his Means* (London: Constable, 1991), 131.

¹¹⁹ For another account which takes this Americanisation of indigenous North American cultures as its focus see James Morris, *Coast to Coast*.

commercialised society based on advertising, ever-increasing productivity, living standards and inflation.¹²⁰ Compared with the consumerism and mass culture of the US, the descriptions of the traditional society were favourable and Hawkes noted that ‘the stand they are making against Americanization is really astonishing.’¹²¹ Given the British and American sensitivity about any criticism of American life, Priestley inevitably had to defend their book against charges of anti-Americanism as journalists labelled him ‘the man who hates America.’¹²² However, as Roger Fagge has noted, Priestley’s work ‘represented a genuine attempt by an idiosyncratic English radical to wrestle with the complicated meaning of America and the modern world.’¹²³ Though the US represented the zenith of the consumer culture of which Priestley was suspicious, he praised his hosts and travelled widely throughout the country. Others who bemoaned the growing homogeneity, conformity of American culture in the 1950s later re-evaluated their assessments. Jan Morris’s reports of her transatlantic trips were punctuated by complaints about the ‘numbing spread of the uniformity’ and in Hawaii she lamented that the island had become the ‘nadir or epitome of razzle-dazzle Americanism.’¹²⁴ Nonetheless, she subsequently remembered that she had been ‘quite wrong’ and conceded that ‘I didn’t know everything after all, and except in superficials [sic] the style of the country seems to me as varied as ever.’¹²⁵

Whilst negative stereotypes and prejudices of the US were popular amongst British visitors, this was not the sole reaction to encounters with life across the Atlantic. More frequently, transatlantic travellers were forced to undergo a more difficult process by which their expectations of American life and culture needed to be reconciled with their observations and experiences. As was outlined in Chapter One about the British impressions of race relations, in some

¹²⁰ J. B. Priestley and Jacquetta Hawkes, *Journey Down a Rainbow* (London: Heinemann, 1957 [1955]), 44.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 154.

¹²² Vincent Brome, *JB Priestley* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988), 209. See also J. B. Priestley, ‘Thoughts in Wilderness: Who is anti-American?’, *New Statesman*, 5 November 1955, 566-7.

¹²³ Roger Fagge, ‘J. B. Priestley, the ‘Modern’ and America’, *Cultural and Social History*, 4, 4 (2007), 491.

¹²⁴ James Morris, *Coast to Coast*, 10 and 180.

¹²⁵ Jan Morris, *Pleasures of a Tangled Life* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1989), 75.

cases the tours prompted little change in the attitudes of Britons. However, others were open about the disconnection between reality and their mental constructions of the country. Jacqueline Hope-Wallace, a worker in welfare administration who embarked on a Commonwealth Fund Scholar in 1953 reflected on this tension as she noted that it was ‘a voyage of discovery, to an Eldorado and New Found Land.’¹²⁶ Another commentator described that it was a kind of *Alice Through the Looking Glass* day for me’ noting that at an American university he found ‘everything recognisable yet everything different.’¹²⁷ The Britons who undertook transatlantic trips were usually more favourable to the US. Surveys conducted by Research Services Limited in 1962 indicated that Britons with recent experience of America were more likely to praise various indexes of its social, cultural and political life as well as attributes concerning the country and its people. For example, 93 percent of recent visitors described Americans as ‘friendly’ whereas amongst those who had never experienced life across the Atlantic the number was only 77 percent.¹²⁸

For many of the young politicians and trade unionists who travelled to the US, the trips were seminal in their political development and there were limited signs of negativity in the contemporary accounts of trade unionists or the subsequent recollections of Labour politicians. Given that Washington was most eager to ensure that burgeoning left-wing figures were not attracted to the propaganda of the USSR, it was in these circles that recollections were most often recorded and, though some complained about aspects of American life, most were quite positive about their trips. Indeed, Roy Jenkins, a Labour MP who was a recipient of a Smith-Mundt fellowship in 1953, remembered that ‘August to October 1953 was a major formative influence in my life’ and that the State Department funding and organisation of his trip was ‘a brilliant piece of unforced propaganda.’¹²⁹ For other commentators, the visits proved the

¹²⁶ Jacqueline Hope-Wallace in S. Gorley Putt (ed), *Cousins and Strangers: Comments on America by Commonwealth Fund Fellows from Britain 1946-1952* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), 3.

¹²⁷ Stephen Potter, *Potter on America*, 96.

¹²⁸ ‘Holiday Survey 1962’, ABMS 3/115, CCC.

¹²⁹ Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 101.

superiority of the American system which was deemed to be better than that of the USSR merely because it was willing to hold such tours. Anne Godwin, the General Secretary of the Clerical Workers' Union, concluded that the act of inviting visitors from overseas disproved any ideas that the US was 'Beelzebub Incarnate in the field of political liberty' and was in fact 'a long way from dictatorship.'¹³⁰

More often than not, though, the recollections from these trips were neither positive nor negative but contained various contrasting stereotypes about America and its public. Although Washington funded these trips with the aim of shaping British perceptions of the US, many participants would have espoused positive views of the country without the financial involvement of the State Department. Though it was fashionable to decry the homogenisation of the US, others stressed the great variety of American life. Labour politician George Brown wrote in 1957 of his tour that:

In those six weeks without leaving America we almost went halfway around the world. We saw every conceivable climactic condition. Met almost every kind of human being. And saw a dozen different political set-ups. To the world it's a country. But in a very real sense, it's a miniature world.¹³¹

Negative stereotypes, prejudices and objections to the US co-existed with more sympathetic, positive and admiring views of the country. The accounts of American visits by *Punch* editor Malcolm Muggeridge were typical in that he voiced a range of ideas, stereotypes and prejudices about the country after experiencing it in the early 1960s. His private remarks included a collection of common yet contradictory stereotypes about Americans and the US. Noting the growth in the size of the *New York Times*, Muggeridge reflected that the 'American pursuit of happiness involves everything getting bigger and bigger – cars, steaks, newspapers, etc. Satiety [is] the enemy of this pursuit, the doom of

¹³⁰ Anne Godwin, 'The American Scene: (III) Casually Observed', *The Clerk*, July-August 1955, 87-8.

¹³¹ George Brown, 'A Candid Friend', *Transport and General Workers' Record*, October 1957, 37.

which haunts American life.’¹³² It was not only the size of American life which perturbed Muggeridge; he was also dismissive or contemptuous about Los Angeles (‘probably most horrible town in the world’) and airport self-service coffee bars (‘a freely constructed concentration camp’).¹³³ Though outspoken in his criticism of various aspects of US life, to conclude on this basis that the journalist was anti-American would be to condemn most of Britain as holding such views. Negative perceptions existed alongside enthusiasm, as Muggeridge noted that student audiences in America ‘are probably the most receptive and appreciative in the world. They exude the spirit of youthfulness; laugh with gay abandon of children, and accept any old dog-eared epigram as though it had come straight from Jonathan Swift.’¹³⁴ His conclusions revealed a country of paradoxes. It was ‘one where a stranger may enjoy the most open-handed and affectionate hospitality, and also the one where he can be most lonely.’¹³⁵ Even though his views of the US were complicated, Muggeridge was conscious of ‘the curious way in which news of America sent to England acquires anti-American slant by the time it appears there.’ He admitted ‘to being myself affected and then always surprised, on coming to America, not to find all youths juvenile delinquents, everyone smoking marijuana, taking bribes, being hauled before Congressional Committees, and otherwise living up to [the] American way of life as projected abroad.’¹³⁶ These conclusions illustrated the complexity and diversity in British attitudes towards America. Experiences of its culture were mediated to a large extent by expectations, which were shaped by an individual’s values and political attitudes.

Conclusions

In post-war Britain, the life and culture in the United States was closely monitored, debated and invoked in diverse debates about the social and cultural changes which occurred in the long 1950s. The decade witnessed the growth of

¹³² John Bright-Holmes (ed), *Like it Was: A Selection from the Diaries of Malcolm Muggeridge*, 25 September 1960 (London: Collins, 1981), 503.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 31 October 1962, 515 and 8 October 1960, 506.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 7 October 1960, 504.

¹³⁵ *Ibid* [n.d.], 518.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 10 October 1960, 508-9.

public affluence and consumerism and America was a useful model for navigating these changes and developments in leisure, entertainment and commerce all prompted assessment of the experience in the US. Britons reacted in various ways to US culture and its export across the Atlantic; political affiliation, age, and social class were amongst the factors which contributed to the differing interpretations of American culture. There were fewer concerns about its influence amongst the general public than from the elites who were often concerned about the influence of imported goods on British standards, tastes, habits and customs. Despite the warnings about the Americanisation of British culture, these debates were complicated with attitudes towards various American exports and products evolving over time. The specific subjects which were associated with this growing American influence changed over time and the intensity of feeling about these imports often diminished when they became an established part of British life imbued with their own characteristics and features. Attitudes towards US commercial television, popular music or the American presence in British cinema operated independently of perceptions about the country's foreign policy. Politicians, officials and commentators regarded as Atlanticist on international questions could simultaneously voice hostile or condescending opinions about US culture. One thing that underpinned these discussions, though, was the idea that British tastes, habits and customs were superior to those of Americans. Despite the high living standards and wages in America, there was nationalistic confidence that the UK was less vulgar and brash or that its way of life was preferable to anything which could be imported from the US.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined British political culture during the long 1950s in order to assess attitudes towards the United States of America with reference to sources not usually utilised in studies of the Anglo-American relationship. During this period, the US had an influence in British politics which was unique for a foreign country. Lessons from across the Atlantic informed a wide variety of debates and policy decisions, providing a guide as politicians, commentators, and the public tried to navigate a range of post-war political, cultural and socio-economic changes. Shared Anglo-American heritage and history meant that this interest had been long apparent but the onset of the Cold War, growth of the 'special relationship' and Washington's increased importance in international affairs only heightened the attention paid to the US. As both countries faced similar challenges in their domestic affairs and international policies, it is unsurprising that America could provide warning or inspiration about future developments. Given the interest in the behaviour, trajectory and values of its main ally, it was inevitable that there would be a variety of British views about American life. Indeed, a range of positive and negative perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices were espoused about the US and the policies pursued by its government. Views were shaped in part by an individual's political background and ideology yet people could hold a range of favourable and unfavourable opinions about the country and its population.

These complexities and nuances in perceptions of the US belie the popular idea that anti-Americanism was widespread in post-war Britain. Allegations about the extent of the phenomenon punctuated almost any discussion of American affairs from its domestic politics and culture to its overseas foreign and defence policy. With the Anglo-American relationship only recently having been established yet particularly important to British international policy, there was eagerness from the establishment to defend the alliance and their ally. Although there was undoubtedly criticism, opposition and in some instances hostility towards Washington's aims, it is questionable whether this amounted to anti-Americanism. Rather than being the result of a surfeit of prejudiced hostility towards the US, the growing anxiety about this attitude was the result

of the Cold War context which defined the long 1950s. Though it was often cited as a prominent attitude, there were limited attempts to define the term and it was invoked in response to almost any criticism of Washington or aspects of American life. During a decade of global tension, any signs of dissent from the Atlanticist policies pursued by the governments of both parties were treated with suspicion and defensiveness. The allegations about anti-Americanism which were first voiced in earnest in the decade after the Second World War were a product of the bipolarity of the era; even the most cautious dissent from the Atlantic Alliance was met with smears in both the US and Britain. In fact, examples of 'anti-Americanism' were less frequent than warnings about the growth of the attitude, with the term becoming more an abusive label than a meaningful analytical category. That anti-Americanism received such scrutiny and provoked anxiety was not evidence of Anglo-American disharmony but a sign of the attention devoted to the country. The importance of the US in the British press, cinema, academia and its political life contributed to the frequency of critical or negative opinion about America which gave rise to the perception that Britons were unfair in their judgements of Americans. In other words, it was the expectation of similarities and extensive focus which caused contrasting outlooks, positions and ideas to be exaggerated or what has been described as the 'narcissism of minor differences' which seemed more important because of the attention they were accorded.¹ However, any objections or criticism was not so much evidence of a disproportionate amount of hostility towards the US but more because of the extent to which British politics was geared towards analysis of America.

Many of the subjects about which Britons repeatedly criticised the US were more complicated than being evidence of reflexive, irrational or reactionary views about its ally. Perceptions about the US were often more about modernity or longstanding policy commitments, beliefs or ideas than judgements of America per se. Judgements about America were formed with reference to a host of ideas and attitudes which pre-dated the onset of the Cold War, the development of the Anglo-American alliance or Washington's rise to global

¹ Peter Baldwin, *The Narcissism of Minor Differences: How America and Europe are Alike* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

pre-eminence. The contemporary warnings about anti-Americanism and the subsequent studies which have identified its deep-seated nature in Britain often overlook this fact that the UK's political culture was particularly attentive to developments across the Atlantic. As a result, criticism of Washington's foreign policies, opposition to aspects of its politics, culture and society would always be more common than similar attitudes to any other nation – even some of Britain's recent enemies. A range of positive and negative stereotypes were invoked about America and its population, which was variously regarded as naive, vulgar, materialistic and bombastic yet generous, friendly, hardworking and vigorous. Pro and anti-American dichotomies pose various problems for categorising or analysing British views about the US. Political affiliations and ideologies affected perceptions of Britain's ally as did changing international circumstances. Staunch Atlanticists on questions of foreign policy could simultaneously hold snobbish views about American culture or serious reservations about aspects of Washington's foreign and defence policy. Paradoxically, the fiercest critics of the country's capitalist system were usually able to find elements of the country with which they identified.

Whether this British interest in the US amounts to a 'special relationship' between the two countries is questionable. The westward gaze of Britain was not unique nor was it necessarily reciprocated by Americans; Washington's global significance after 1945 meant that all Western European countries contained a variety of views about the US or were subjected to the 'coca-colonization' of American public diplomacy and cultural export.² Without an assessment of American political culture, it is difficult to conclude as to whether Britain attracted a similar amount of attention in the US. Notions of a liberal Anglosphere or Anglo-America also need to be treated with some caution given that a not dissimilar engagement with America was apparent outside of the transatlantic zone. Without a similar study of Britain's place in

² On other European countries' engagement with the US see for example Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Alexander Stephan, *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945* (Oxford: Berhahn, 2006).

US political culture, therefore, such conclusions are impossible but there are grounds for wariness of these claims given the British experience of the long 1950s. Ideas about the common values, language, culture and heritage were invoked during various British debates about the relationship with America. Because of the multiple identities in both countries, however, there were frequent disagreements about which values the US represented. Though many politicians, commentators and officials claimed to share values with America, the notion of an Anglosphere is problematic because the populations of the demographic changes to both countries in the second half of the twentieth century. What can be safely concluded, nonetheless, is that during the long 1950s America loomed large in British political culture and the imagination of its population.

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